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Esther Eidinow

METAMORPHOSIS, LANDSCAPE, *and* TRAUMA *in* GRECO-ROMAN MYTH

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Cover image: Black-figure kalpis, 510–500 BCE, attributed to the Micali Painter and now in the Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia. The body of the vase shows a series of images of a man falling into the sea: in the first, the man has a human head and a fish tail; in each of the four successive images, the figure has a dolphin head and legs in place of his tail.

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Spelling and Abbreviations

I have, in general, preferred to use Greek spelling for the names of places and mythic figures, even when they appear in Latin sources, to lessen the chance of confusion; that said, I have retained the familiar Latin spelling of some names or terms.

For ancient authors and periodicals, I have either spelled them out or used the abbreviations from the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* 4th edn. (2012, edited by S. Hornblower, A. Spawforth, and E. Eidinow), which are also available online.

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Introduction

Marvellous Mutability

The nymph Kyane dissolves with grief into the waters she rules:[1]

> But Kyane, grieving for the rape of the goddess and for her fountain's rights thus set at naught, nursed an incurable wound in her silent heart, and dissolved all away in tears; and into those very waters was she melted whose great divinity she had been but now. You might see her limbs softening, her bones becoming flexible, her nails losing their hardness. And first of all melt the slenderest parts: her dark hair, her fingers, legs and feet; for it is no great change from slender limbs to cool water. Next after these, her shoulders, back and sides and breasts vanish into thin watery streams. And finally, in place of living blood, clear water flows through her weakened veins and nothing is left that you can touch.

In this powerful evocation of overwhelming sadness, Ovid draws us inexorably into this physical experience of surrender to unbearable anguish. As he marks the softening and dissolution of body parts, the slow melting of legs and feet, he mentions (almost as an aside) how 'it is no great change from slender limbs to cool water'—and, for some of us, this will capture precisely a certain, familiar sense of physical liquidity as skin and substance seem to deliquesce.

Although there were other accounts of the myth of Kyane in which she was not transformed, we do not know of another version of this particular metamorphosis.[2] Whether or not Ovid was aware of one, he is, nevertheless, playing with an underlying narrative pattern that is established by the time he composed the *Metamorphoses*. He makes it his own: Ovid's play with the language of change is particularly skilful; he draws out the moments of transformation, portraying both the natural biological processes and the supernatural dimensions.[3] Quite what

[1] Ov. *Met.* 5.425–437 (trans. Miller 1916, with some adjustments); see further discussion by Rosati 2024b ad loc. on Ovid's detailed description of the 'phases of transformation' of Kyane.

[2] See the case study Water, p. 152. Cic *Verr.* 4.107 and Diod. Sic. 5.4.2 describe this as the name of a spring marking where Hades descends; cf. Claudian *Rapt Pers* 3.231 where she is a nymph left 'half dead' after Hades' attack.

[3] Barchiesi (2024a: 8) notes 'an increase of interest in the relationship between transformation and language' as one of two innovations introduced by Ovid to poetry of metamorphosis. See also Frontisi-Ducroux 2017: 19: 'Il accélère ce qui est le probable model biologique de sa description: le poussée d'une plante, le déploiement des feuilles, la lignification d'une tige, tout ce qui n'est perceptible a l'oeil nu que par phases saccadées et par observations successives. Et parallèlement sa description ralentit pour donner à voir le passage surnaturel d'un état a l'autre, de l'humanité au végétal…ou pour d'autres, à l'animal.'

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his intentions were we can only speculate: while some scholars have suggested a deliberate mockery of quasi-scientific explanations of such wonders,[4] Frontisi-Ducroux submits that perhaps Ovid's approach was informed by a certain level of atheism. More recently scholars have found in Ovid's poem more generally, a voice that speaks to the modern age through his focus on environmental change.[5]

Ovid offers a particularly vivid evocation of metamorphosis, but this study does not focus on his or any one ancient writer's work. Rather, it seeks to answer the question of how we may use such mythic and marvellous material for the study of ancient history, by turning to the potential significance of the experiences at the heart of these stories of corporeal metamorphosis into the surrounding landscape.[6] While no doubt many of these myths were circulating orally before this time, I suggest they acquired most of their distinctive story patterns of corporeal transformation during the Archaic and Classical periods, when we find them in texts.[7] Later examples, increasingly plentiful in Hellenistic and Roman literary and artistic expression, elaborate these basic narrative patterns in different ways for various purposes, but the essential narrative patterns remain—and remain powerful. The experiences these myths describe were, I suggest, relevant to audiences before Ovid, and, indeed, continue to compel audiences, even as some of the underlying beliefs about the world, which originally shaped them, have changed.

In my reading of these stories, I focus on the role of the body, and the embodied experience of emotions, arguing that these narratives allow us to glimpse aspects of our historical subjects, which in other sources remain largely unseen.[8] In the first place, I argue, by foregrounding the body's mutability, they reveal culturally specific understandings of the interrelationship of human, non-human, and

[4] See discussion by von Glinski 2012: 38–40; and see further on Ovid's interactions with scientific language, and the poetry of Lucretius in particular, Barchiesi 2024a: 14.

[5] See the essays in Martelli and Sissa 2023; Sharrock et al. 2020 offer a very stimulating reflection on the text as a focus of change.

[6] I am using the term 'landscape' instead of 'environment' deliberately. While perceptions of the environment may be considered integral aspects of this study, this study is concerned with the social construction of that space—that is, the cultural creation of a physical, but also a gendered, social landscape; I expand on ideas of landscape and riskscape in this chapter.

[7] I have included myths of metamorphosis recorded in Homeric literature. Bearing in mind influences from Mesopotamian cultures on early Greek literature (see Penglase 1994), it is interesting to note that earlier examples of metamorphosis from surviving Mesopotamian literature are 'few in number and briefly developed' as Karen Sonik (2012: 391) notes. She observes that when these describe complete changes of state, they seem often to precede the complete annihilation of the identity of the individual and their death; more temporary changes are managed by a divine figure, who ensures the change is only transient.

[8] In turning to myth as a potential historical source, I have drawn inspiration from Michael Jameson's (2014: 101) observation that 'One of the ways in which we may hope to penetrate behind the screen presented by the prose sources is through the images and metaphors of poetry and through myths and fictionalized history that serve as aetiologies and analogies to the rites.' Jameson is considering the place of, and the role and attitude towards, 'the darker forces that hover over the battlefield, the terror of death and the pain the fighters must confront' which are largely 'out of sight', as he notes, in prose sources.

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more-than-human[9]—not only that the human body is a part of an extended network of being, but that it consists of, and crucially interacts with, the same substances that comprise the surrounding landscape: earth, water, air, and fire. In turn, these stories relay some sense of those bodies in their social and physical contexts: more particularly, they tell us of perceived social and supernatural dangers, and describe bodies both at risk and of risk. And finally, but key to the previous two dimensions, I argue that these are narratives of the body that capture one of its most ephemeral aspects: the corporeal transformations they describe are intrinsically linked to the experience of intense, even traumatic emotions.

In this Introduction I go on to provide a more detailed account of the bases for these arguments, setting them in their larger context of scholarship. I explore, first, my approach to 'Myth and Metamorphosis'. Here I explain in more detail how I understand this type of myth to have developed—with the essential narrative patterns formed in the Archaic and Classical periods, when they began to be written down—and the elements of these stories that still hold power today. Turning back to the period of their initial formation, I explore the ancient approach to the composition of the body and its relations with the elements of the cosmos ('Embodied Elements') that I suggest underlies these stories, before investigating how they present the body as a site of extreme emotions and emotional danger ('Emotional Risks'). The embodied experiences that these myths evoke, I argue, may be viewed through the lens of modern research on responses to extreme emotions and emotional trauma. This reveals not only a distinct dimension of these myths, but also suggests something of their cross-cultural relevance.

Four case studies follow the Introduction: Earth, Air, Fire, and Water. These examine stories of metamorphosis that seem most relevant to each of the elements.[10] I have focused on these varieties of metamorphoses, because, I would argue, they describe the making of the physical landscape. While some myths of animal metamorphosis are similar, including the role played by extreme emotions, they are sufficiently different in their implications to merit a separate discussion; here, I have limited my examination of animal metamorphoses to birds.

The stories in each case study relate to the predominant element with which the bodies depicted as changing interact, and the key dynamic of that interaction. Thus, stories collected in 'Earth' includes bodies that combine and coalesce with earth materials (stone, rock, earth) in a dynamic of becoming 'rooted'; they include stories about petrifaction and of men or women becoming plants. Those tales collected under 'Air' comprise experiences of being 'removed': bodies taken

[9] See Cohen 2013: xxv for the ways in which eco-theorists have evoked this idea via terms such as 'mangle', 'network', 'mesh', 'meshwork', etc. I am here drawing particularly on Abram 1996, as well as Bubandt 2018, for the notion of the more-than-human (in the sense of earthly experience beyond what is human). See also Eidinow and Schliephake 2024 for further examples of these theories applied to ancient evidence.

[10] For stories of humans becoming animal, see Forbes Irving 1990: 96.

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by gods and winds—sometimes to be translated into stars; bodies jumping into air, or metamorphosing into birds. 'Fire' stories explore the role of fire in the destruction and transformation (often towards divinity) of mortals. These are stories of change with a dynamic of climactic 'revelation', alongside its opposites, secrecy, deceit, and concealment. Finally, the case study 'Water' includes tales concerned with bodies changing in interaction with fresh water, which encompass a dynamic of 'remembrance'; and stories that concern the sea, underpinned by a dynamic of 'rebirth'.

In each case, I have examined these stories for insights into experiences of the risks perceived as inherent in human–human and human–divine relations. As I will explain below, analysing these risks may reveal some of the concerns of the cultures in which these narrative patterns were developed, in particular, those risks intrinsic to the social roles and behaviours of men and women. My approach to the individual stories foregrounds questions of gender, drawing out and comparing the differences and similarities of particular narrative patterns describing male and female protagonists. These stories, I argue, express risks of transgressions, both for individuals and for the wider community; for example, in ancient Greek cultures, the dangers of *miasma* or *agos*, that is, of states of pollution or sacrality.

But these transgressions include not only actions (of commission and omission), but also, and significantly, experiences of extreme emotions. Drawing on cognitive theories that focus on the role of the body in meaning-making, and psychological studies of trauma, I suggest that these myths of bodies changing are stories that convey an experience of extreme and embodied emotion, even trauma, in which a person and the world around them are experienced as transformed. It is an experience, I suggest, that is common to the human condition across time and place. Thus, I suggest, these stories hold the attention of audiences both ancient and modern; they persist as objects of fascination, conveying an experience of the emotional body that makes an implicit, associative sense.

These arguments are not an attempt to challenge existing analyses of these myths—these stories are rich and can bear many different lenses[11]—nor am I trying to explain away the power of these stories. My intention is, rather, to invest in them, exploring their potential as narratives that communicate at many different levels, highlighting aspects that may enrich our reading of these stories and the cultures that produced them. It is the case, with regard to my case studies, that my own selection of stories brings emphasis to particular dimensions of the tales; another person's choices would draw attention to another aspect and suggest a

[11] For example, as Zajko and O'Gorman (2013: 9) argue concerning Ovid's depiction of Daphne's metamorphosis into a laurel tree in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1.452–566): 'The relationship between mind and body is centrally important here but it is also highly problematic: Ovid does not help the observer, who is left to surmise some inner state by means of physical phenomena. It is through the observer's interpretative choices that these phenomena may become signs of internal life, or, to use a psychoanalytic term, symptoms.'

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different focus, an alternative arrangement. Rather than viewing this as a problem, I see it as part of the crucial kaleidoscopic fluidity or 'categorical messiness' of myth that informs their ongoing power,[12] and readers may like to consider how my categories could interact with others that they may see in this material. And perhaps a larger point emerges here, as well: looking across these different versions reveals how the way we choose to hear or to tell these stories, where we choose to linger, shapes the perception of what we mean by a metamorphosis. Is metamorphosis a moment or is it a process; and, if the latter, then when in the story does it begin? The potent nexus of bodies-landscapes-emotions-transformations raises questions about our understanding of metamorphosis itself, and how this speaks to the lived experiences of ancient men and women.

In what follows here, I offer some more detailed explanations of the different theoretical aspects of my approach.

Myth and Metamorphosis

Myth is hard to define intelligibly; while we often turn to labels that include gods, heroes, or monsters, we must also remember that 'myth' is a label created by modern scholarship, and that the history of the Greek term *muthos* is far more nuanced than simply indicating any specific type of story or designating an uncomplicated opposition between one type of narrative and another.[13] Indeed, it is apparent that the term *muthos* had a wide semantic range: the closest translation might be 'stories'. The term was often employed, at least in the Archaic and Classical periods, without an evaluative aspect, and gradually developed a more specific meaning in texts produced during what we might call the fifth-century enlightenment, and, most notably in the work of Plato.[14]

This Introduction started with Ovid's description of Kyane from his *Metamorphoses*, just one of his extraordinary evocations of corporeal transformation in that poem. It reminds us how a specific myth-telling is inseparable from the cultures in which it appears; a particular version will not only arise from the tangle of its past versions, it will also, in turn, be meaningfully entwined with the lives and experience of the person who currently tells it.[15] But even while we consider these specific tellings, can we, in the end, construct a clear, direct line between any author and mythic material? The stories that survive from ancient

[12] I quote with gratitude one of the anonymous readers for the Press.

[13] Calame 2003: 9–11.

[14] Calame 2009: 4; Detienne 1986. See Hdt. 2.23.1, 2.45.1 and Thuc. 1.22.4; for analysis of the philosophical development of myth, especially the contrast between logoi and mythoi developed by Plato, see Morgan 2000.

[15] Goody (1977: 24) argues that it is this specific creative act that a structuralist analysis obscures. A particularly helpful account of the sources and influences on myth in Herodotos' *Histories* is provided by Baragwanath and de Bakker 2012: 1–56.

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cultures reach us through multiple channels, and myth thus can be described in terms of 'a patchwork', with 'rough stitches' and 'faulty joins'.[16] The nature of myth means that, in general, the specific context of a narrative's telling and its being heard is hard, if not impossible, to identify; and, by the very nature of myth, we cannot be certain of all the details of each version.

Underlying any of multiple written versions, indeed, explicit in a number of our sources, are oral processes of transmission. Diodorus Siculus notes, for example, in his telling of the story of one of the mythical Hemitheas (more on their multiplicity later), how 'many and various accounts have been handed down regarding her, but we shall recount that which has prevailed and is in accord with what the natives relate' (the natives, in this case, being those who dwell near her temple in Kastabos, southern Karia).[17] And Plato reminds us, in the *Republic*, of the informal accounts of myths told at a mother's knee.[18] Even when, in some examples, we seem to be able to observe the conscious manipulation of myths, this raises in turn the question of what this meant to earlier audiences: would those listening to the fifth-century sophist Gorgias' *Defence of Helen* think of his account as a new version to add to those they already knew, or as a 'false' version?[19] As Fritz Graf has pointed out, myth 'does not coincide with a particular text or literary genre…it transcends the text'.[20] And, while this discussion largely concentrates on the representation of myths in texts, we must also add to it the kaleidoscopic contributions of visual culture: the vast variety of ways in which the images of the ancient world depict moments from mythic stories, and, in turn, viewers, over time and place, invest them with meaning.[21]

This raises at least two ways of viewing 'myth': on the one hand, the individual stories; on the other, the steady thrum of narrative patterning that emerges across different contexts of storytellings, with diverse results. The questions raised by such apparently transcendent elements—common story patterns, shared motifs—have been explored most influentially perhaps in Lévi-Strauss' structuralist approach, and the notion of myth as a form of language, which can be analysed into its constituent parts, according to its relationship with time. Thus, myth pertains to the realm of *langue* (its rules and conventions) and *parole* (individual instances of its use), and to a third level 'distinct from the other two' and 'this lies

[16] Finley 1975: 16. See also Brillante 1990: 101.
[17] Diod. Sic. 5.62–63 (trans. Oldfather 1939).
[18] Pl. *Resp.* 377b–c.
[19] See Morgan 2000; with review by Edmonds 2001.
[20] Graf 1993: 2. See also Doniger 1996 on the universal aspects of myth. Zajko (2007) has given a masterful and succinct overview of the difficulties of working with Greek myth, a form that she sees emerging from a (388–9) 'diversity of narrative contexts that existed in ancient Greece' and which confront us with the question of how to 'differentiate between different kinds of stories…which narratives should be regarded as constituting a particular myth and which should be excluded for not being sufficiently or primarily "mythological".' For my project, I take her lead, aiming (389) 'to emphasise the historical particularity of [their] material and to downplay the inconveniences of its sometimes fragmentary form and muddled genealogy.'
[21] Cf. Lorenz 2016.

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in the *story* which it tells.'[22] Drawing further on this parallel with language, Lévi-Strauss identifies myth's constituent parts, which he calls 'mythemes'; as with the constituent parts of language, these acquire significance in combination with other mythemes in '*bundles of relations*'.[23] When we read a mythic narrative, we are looking at the surface structure of the myth—its *parole*; but by locating the mythemes, we are able to identify the 'deep structure' of the narrative, which reveals oppositions or profound cultural contradictions.[24] In a particularly arresting image, Lévi-Strauss describes how, while myth is a process of continuous growth, 'its structure remains discontinuous…it closely corresponds, in the realm of the spoken word, to the kind of being a crystal is in the realm of physical matter.'[25]

In my case studies, I have, similarly, focused on locating the underlying narrative patterns, and to that extent it can be argued that I take something of a structuralist view. But this does not mean that I imagine there to be an original, an UR-version of each myth; nor that I think that such patterns can be divorced from the story or the culture, in which they appear. I rather follow a path of scholarship that views mythic narratives as a body of story patterns shared across time and place and appropriated by groups and individuals to be told in tales that served their different purposes.[26] In this sense then, this study shares with recent scholarship the view that 'a myth' is itself a network of stories, reaching across

[22] Lévi-Strauss 1955: 52; italics in original.

[23] Lévi-Strauss 1955: 53; italics in original.

[24] A clear description of this system is given by Csapo (2005: 220–243). But Lévi-Strauss is inconsistent in his approach, as Fritz Graf (1993: 46) has noted: he classifies his mythemes by content rather than form (which would maintain their comparison with phonemes); and interprets that content in terms of 'reality', in particular, the sociological 'code' of a culture. Later, in *Mythologies*, he moves from the mytheme to the mythical symbol, discovering the abstract relations or oppositions that enjoy universal significance. For Lévi-Strauss the temporality of such narratives was unimportant both within the stories themselves, in the structures of their constituent parts, and in the context within which they were told. As Goody (1977: 24) observed, by emphasizing 'myth as a social fact, a cultural statement, the key to a code', this approach described myth as 'a static factor in a society, closely linked to the cultural framework, and to that extent removed from the manipulation of particular individuals, individuals who might have some particular gift for the verbal arts.' This highlights the difficulties of working with narratives that have both one particular narrator, and myriad authors, most of which are lost in time, a paradox in part resolved, in part reinforced by Claude Calame's approach. Although Calame (2003: 29) has argued that 'The narratives we consider "mythic" exist only as products actualized in the form of their recitation, that is, in the literary forms attached to the clearly defined circumstances of their enunciation', nevertheless, there is also room within his approach for reaching beyond this level. As he observes (2003: 31) 'when an erudite reading places us before the "finished product," nothing prevents us, from the perspective of the receiver, from attempting to "descend" from the discursive manifestation to the more "profound" plans of its organization and schematization.' Clarke (2000) in his review of Calame's *Poétique des mythes dans la Grèce antique* asks about other forms of narrativizing, including vase painters and 'ordinary story-tellers'.

[25] Lévi-Strauss 1955: 65.

[26] A similar process can be suggested for sharing and appropriation between and among Indo-European cultures, and trading cultures (see Burkert 1985: 16–17; Penglase 1994; West 2007; Wengrow 2013). Some cultures, in turn, seem to have appropriated Greek mythic narratives with very little culturally specific adaptation, see Osborne 2001a. As for broader cross-cultural commonalities of traditional narratives, as Anderson (2000: 86) has shown, in some cases, a 'tale-complex' can be traced; however, these rather demonstrate the ways in which cultures adapt these traditional tales to their own requirements; see, for example, the connections Anderson (2000: 149–150) establishes between the tale of Little Red Riding Hood, and the Greek myths associated with Lykaon.

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local and global, past and present, across and between different social groups.[27] A network provides a heuristic device for reflection on the entity that is myth—and on the cultures, the societies, the people within them. As Noyes has argued so succinctly:[28]

> As both field procedure and organizing metaphor, the network is better adapted than more bounded notions of group for getting at the social grounding of expressive practices. The network lets us get rid of those boundaries, so theoretically troublesome, and gives us a structure for talking about long-distance and mediated relationships. It addresses our concerns with multivocality and complexity by understanding actors as both interrelated and uniquely positioned agents; it prevents us from making a priori assumptions about meaning or origins by demanding that we examine the content and character of any given set of relationships. It might even let us ground the split postmodern subject in some social reality, helping us trace, in Bakhtinian fashion, the dialogue of influences at play in an individual.

If we view the network for its links as much as its nodes, then we are prompted to explore how, in those spaces, story emerges—literally, told by one person to another—and how, in the telling of that story, meaning is activated. It is this emerging meaning that this study sets out to investigate. Rather than arguing that narrative patterns are isolated from any culture, this study explores the patterns that have emerged across different networks, over time, place, and culture, and what these may offer us as insights into those cultures. As Noyes asks: 'How do forms move across time and space and remain recognizable? How do the people who recurrently interact in a given situation generate forms in common, and how do those forms work back again upon their makers?'[29] From that perspective, while this study of myths of metamorphoses examines the power of individual myth-tellings, it focuses primarily on understanding the shared culture of metamorphic myth.

Turning to myths of metamorphosis specifically, it may be useful to consider their chronological development. In line with the great scholar of metamorphosis, P. M. C. Forbes Irving, we can identify three key time periods: first, metamorphoses in the epics of Homer and the *Homeric Hymns*.[30] These transformations tend not to be complex; they generally offer a public communication from the gods through a highly unusual moment in which ontological boundaries are briefly

[27] Cf. Iles Johnston 2018 and Hawes 2022. In that respect, while I second the emphasis on connections in Katherine Clarke's (2017: 31) argument that 'it is travel, connections, and journeys from which the real power of myth in geography and geography in myth derives', I do not divorce this from the presence of the local, seeing these as integrated. (She does acknowledge the 'local nature and uses of so many mythical narratives' but contrasts this with the importance of the mobility of myth.)

[28] Noyes 2016: 39. [29] Noyes 2016: 15. [30] Forbes Irving 1990: 7–37.

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crossed. Examples include the metamorphoses of the gods, which let mortals know with whom they have actually been speaking—but which clearly underline the difference between a mortal and a god.[31] Alongside this are metamorphoses so remarkable that they are understood to provide important symbols to their mortal witnesses: for example, in the *Iliad*, the Greek army sees the transformation into stone of a snake attacking a sparrow and her young; it is interpreted by Calchas, the Greek army's seer, as signifying the timeline of the fall of Troy.[32] In general, there are few magical episodes of metamorphosis: as others have observed, when these do occur, they tend to be set in the very marginal locations of the world, such as, famously, on Kirke's island, where Odysseus' men are turned into animals;[33] or the remote past, as in the story of Niobe, turned to stone as she grieves her murdered children.[34] But even here, the emphasis remains on retaining firm ontological boundaries: Kirke's victims retain their sense of themselves as humans before they are eventually rescued, and even Niobe retains her very human appetites, despite her petrified form.[35]

The second time period, encompassing Archaic and Classical periods, offers stories of metamorphosis that relate a more direct interaction between gods and mortals. In these, the ontological boundary is crossed in the mortal realm, with fuller details about the experiences and emotions of the individuals involved, and the results of those transformations remain as a part of the human world. As may already be clear, I am taking a historical view of the common narrative patterns that structure stories of metamorphosis: for the most part, I understand their development, at least in written form, as chiefly rooted in Greek culture(s) of this period. Examples that we find here include stories that draw attention to the punishment by gods of mortals for transgressions and offences; many of these stories are dramatized by the Tragedians.[36] But alongside these more intense versions of transformation, we may also begin to see the rationalizations of these fantastic tales, which increasingly explain away their magical aspects and lean towards understanding them as metaphors rather than metamorphoses: for example, in the work of Palaephatus of Athens, which may be dated to the fourth century BCE, although others have suggested a later date.[37]

Once we move into the third period, covering the Hellenistic and Roman periods, we see a great increase in stories of metamorphosis—and also a change of focus.

[31] A few examples of many include Hom. *Od.* 1.105 (Athena looks like Mentes) and 3.371–373 (Athena leaves in the form of a vulture); Hom. *Il.* 7.58–61 (Athena and Apollo settle in a tree in the form of birds) and 20.224 (Boreas, the wind, becomes a horse). On the verbs used to describe these changes, especially forms of the verb *eidomai* meaning 'looking like' see Buxton 2009: 23–23 and 30–37.

[32] Hom. *Il.* 2.308–320; discussed in more detail in the case study Earth, p. 33.

[33] Hom. *Od.* 10.210–220.

[34] Niobe: Hom. *Il.* 24.602–617; see case study Earth, pp. 29, 34–43.

[35] Forbes Irving 1990: 10–11.

[36] Forbes Irving (1990: 13) gives Aeschylus as writing six transformation stories, Sophocles five, and Euripides eleven.

[37] Stern 1996 for the earlier date and Delattre 2022a: 85 for the later.

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The vast number is in part the result of the poet Ovid's creativity (he alone is credited with writing about some 250 transformations) especially the poem *Metamorphoses*.[38] In this work, Ovid marks both change and continuity in the telling of stories of metamorphosis. He continues a 'great tradition' of metamorphosis 'that opens with the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* and runs without much interruption down to the Augustan era'.[39] Indeed, it is highly likely that Ovid drew on some of the many previous collections of stories of metamorphoses, which were often assembled, with a didactic aim, as explanations of the origins of phenomena. Boios, for example, wrote about the transformations of men into birds in his *Ornithogonia*; Nicander wrote a more diverse collection *Heteroioumena*. But Ovid frequently develops his own versions of stories that we know from earlier sources, with emphasis on particular emotional or psychological aspects.[40] And his work is also an 'aggressive Romanisation or de-Hellenisation' of these stories, one that literally demonstrates the movement of Greek culture from Greece to Italy and Rome during the course of the poem.[41]

Indeed, across the Imperial period, as Charles Delattre has charted, mythography expands to cover the Roman Empire's new territory; a new creativity generates a distinctive form of mythography, and—as part of the new currency of *paideia*—its cultural value also increases.[42] With regard to myths of metamorphosis, compilation certainly continues: texts such as that of Hyginus' *Fabulae* indicate a widespread interest in myths; that collection, with its focus on ease of use, appears to have offered a Roman audience quick access to digested Greek material.[43] But, alongside, there is also further mythographic evolution, as the familiar narrative patterns provide scholars with the foundations to create additional stories to 'fill in the empty spaces of their sources…offering versions that are unattested anywhere else.'[44] The mythographic treatises of this period, such as ps.-Plutarch's *De fluviis* or the *Parallela Minora*, or Antoninus Liberalis' *Metamorphoses*, explore a world of myth that is often distinct from the stories of the Archaic and Classical periods, introducing new characters and events.[45] This creativity is not only found in the more elaborate works of the period, but also, it has been suggested, in the more seemingly straightforward texts, such as that of Apollodoros.[46]

More specifically, myths of metamorphoses are used in a variety of ways and contexts to comment on social, political, and cultural experience both within and beyond Rome. We can see this simply in the treatment of the spatial contexts of

[38] Forbes Irving 1990: 19. [39] Barchiesi 2024a: 7.
[40] Barchiesi (2024a: 8) highlights the emphasis on a 'moral problem' as an Ovidian innovation.
[41] Barchiesi 2024a: 18. [42] Delattre 2022a: esp. 78–80.
[43] Fletcher 2022; Cameron 2004. [44] Delattre 2022a: 88.
[45] Delattre 2022a: 85. See Delattre 2022b: 145–146 on the transmission of Antoninus Liberalis' *Metamorphoses*, and ways in which references to other writers (indicated in the margins of the manuscript *Palatinus Graecus* 398) may be understood as underlining the separation of Antoninus Liberalis' accounts from earlier versions.
[46] Delattre 2022a: 89, also mentions Hyginus here.

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these stories, and their meaning:[47] Lykophron, for example, offers twenty-eight separate metamorphoses in the *Alexandra* (perhaps liking their 'magical cancellation of normal reality and accepted fact');[48] a key theme of Kassandra's speech, as Simon Hornblower has noted, is the transformation of Troy into Rome.[49] Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, for example, has been read as appropriating Hellenization; scholars have argued that he then uses the imagery of these stories to play on the experience of flux vs. stability in the Augustan regime.[50] In the *Aeneid*, Rome emerges as a result of 'the hero's transformation from the last remnant of a city doomed to fall to the founder of a civilization fated to endure.'[51] Pausanias, meanwhile, moves through a landscape that has been transformed by Rome's conquest, his stories of metamorphosis can be read as a narrative commentary on the socio-political, and very material, changes he observes around him. Clearly influenced by the mythographic tradition of rationalization, he often explains away the stories of metamorphosis that he tells, sometimes in several versions.[52] Yet his stance remains ambiguous: he evokes a dizzying dual view of a past time when men could be turned into animals— the story of Lykos transformed into a wolf, about which he states his belief[53]—and his present time, when such transformations no longer happen because of human failing, and, a little later in his text, because truth is mingled with falsehoods.[54]

Just as these tales are told for different purposes, so, in turn, have scholars explored them from a variety of perspectives: some have focused on the physical landscape and emphasize the role of these stories as aitiologies, or stories of origin, for landmarks or other physical phenomena. There is no doubt that many of these stories provide such accounts; and yet, as an explanation of the genre itself, this leaves so many questions unanswered that it can only ever be the start of such an investigation.[55] Others see these myths as primarily offering stories of origin for the social landscape, in particular for 'rites of passage'.[56] The idea that myths of metamorphosis may explain a particular ritual is very appealing; nevertheless, it may begin to break down when examined in more detail.[57] Indeed, while a

[47] Delattre 2022a: esp. 78–80.

[48] See Hornblower 2015: 94; on the use of metamorphoses in the poem, 93–94; see also 161–163 for further detailed discussion of the specific episodes.

[49] Hornblower 2022: xix.

[50] Barchiesi 2024a: 18, 30, and 42. Also on approach to the Augustan regime: Feldherr 2002: 177–178; cf. Feeney 1991: 188–249.

[51] Feldherr 2002: 168. [52] Paus. 5.7.3, 9.2.3–4; see Hawes 2014: esp. 205.

[53] Paus. 8.2.4. [54] Paus. 8.2.5–7. [55] See Forbes Irving 1990: 59.

[56] Létoublon (2017: 346), for example, argues that metamorphosis (which 'tells in a timeline what metaphor displays in a single moment of time') can be seen as such. He suggests that this is what is then captured in different genres: thus, the Greek novel reveals (348) 'how young girls and youths may go through this period of their life, what tests or trials are they supposed to succeed in, encountering one another, falling in love, separations, and so on, the existing rituals being interpreted as some kind of symbolic transposition of actual trials.'

[57] Forbes Irving (1990: 50–52) has made a powerful argument for the limitations of this approach. Kenneth Dowden (1989: 196) for example has argued that 'The animal girls of Greek myth, whether

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process of development is supposed to underpin the ritual structure of a rite of passage, many stories of metamorphosis specifically curtail any such development, and, instead, 'result[s] in a state that is neither life nor death, but something in between.'[58]

A more recent, and more compelling, approach has emphasized how ancient stories of metamorphoses evoke *thambos* or 'astonishment'.[59] Richard Buxton pays close attention to descriptions of metamorphosis in different genres, and notes how important such an approach is,[60] in order to avoid imposing assumptions about the ancient Greek perception of the process involved, and tidying up what are otherwise uncanny and profoundly baffling episodes, allowing them 'to be astonishing, but not *too* astonishing.'[61] In and of itself, astonishment may appear to have little explanatory power, but the concept is important as it reminds modern readers of a crucial element of mortal relationships with the gods.[62]

This is a key emphasis of the work of Françoise Frontisi-Ducroux, who explores the moment of metamorphosis for its effects on the mortals who witness it and its significance for broader questions of mortal relations with the divine.[63] She argues for the apparent difficulty of describing the moment of metamorphosis as indicating the distance between mortals and gods, and the way that divine time cannot be perceived by mortals, drawing attention to how the majority of ancient Greek writers describe metamorphosis as occurring 'in the blink of an eye' and emphasising their use of the aorist tense to capture that moment.[64] She suggests

cows, deer or bears plainly enough correspond to the wolves and bears of the boys' traditions.' But when examined for its implications, this idea is harder to substantiate: the wolves and bears are (in this interpretation) the manifestation of ecstatic packs of initiands in an Indo-European tradition. But these girls are neither ecstatic nor in packs, and, in the stories that describe them, when they roam, misery and death ensue; they do not fit this explanatory myth pattern.

[58] Hardie 2002: 82–83, and cf. Harris 2013.

[59] Buxton 2009: *passim*; but see especially 250. Similarly, Sarah Iles Johnston (2018: 203) focuses on this quality of wonder (citing Buxton) and emphasizes the ways in which these stories are 'ripping good yarns about extraordinary events.'

[60] Buxton 2009: 21. Buxton criticizes Frontisi-Ducroux's (2003) examination of metamorphosis (which focuses on the iconography of metamorphosis) for leaving 'unexplored many details of metamorphosis narratives in their diverse contexts'; he makes the same criticism of Forbes Irving (1990).

[61] Buxton 2009: 36, italics in original. Buxton is discussing S. West's (1988) commentary on Hom. *Od.* 1.320, where Athene disguised as Mentes exits in the form of a bird. In turn, he notes how Frontisi-Ducroux's (2003: 90–91) treatment of metamorphosis in the *Odyssey* comes to rest on the idea of a disappearance that simply is not found in the text; but she goes on to define her point more precisely.

[62] Thumiger (2011: 24) raises both this insight and this criticism and points out (25) that Buxton fails to introduce questions of belief or explore the implications of these stories in depth.

[63] Frontisi-Ducroux 2003: 90–92.

[64] Frontisi-Ducroux 2003: 91–92: the descriptions, marked by (92) 'la valeur ponctuelle de l'aoriste…peut indiquer que l'action des dieux est insaisissable, que le temps du divin échappe à la perception des mortels.' Letoublon (2017) also focuses on the linguistic aspect, borrowing the translation of the title of Cartier Bresson's (1952) volume *Images à la Sauvette* (in English, *The Decisive Moment*), to evoke the key moment of transformation (see Plummer 2005). Letoublon notes not only the use of the aorist tense, but also the ways in which use of transitive verbs (6) 'indicate that someone else is implied other than the metamorphosed person and his/her persecutor, generally a god who feels pity or anger.' See also Frontisi-Ducroux 2003: 183–5 for a discussion of terminology, which makes similar observations.

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that the ancients may have viewed time as 'more static than kinetic', very different from modern perceptions that have been shaped by cinema.[65] Although Buxton criticises her for arguing for an idea of disappearance not found in the *Odyssey*, in fact, her comments may help to elucidate his notion of 'astonishment' and its power.[66]

We can perhaps add to this approach by considering the transformative power of myths. Claude Calame has suggested that myths may have had a pragmatic effect, that is, that they may have had the power to bring about change in the audience or in their environment; he relates this particularly to the narration of myth in a ritualized setting, and the power of the metaphors of myth to connect with the quotidian world.[67] Calame has argued that this was achieved through consciously deployed techniques, including topographical, verbal or physical cues, or metaphysical connections. Building on this work, Sarah Iles Johnston has drawn particular attention to 'kennings' ('circumlocutions whose sense depends on the audience's knowledge of a myth') and observes how they 'temporarily collapse the distance between the mythic and the everyday realm', merging the two realms both spatially and temporally.[68]

And this raises a key question for this study: how do we understand the process of metamorphosis, and, in turn, how is this different from the understanding of ancient audiences (over time and place, and in all their variety)? This is more than a question about intellectual approaches. If we consider what happens when a story is told, we can highlight the embodied interactivity of the narrative process and the relationship between teller and audience.[69] Well-told stories may engage with us at a neurophysical level;[70] as Joshua Landy argues, fiction can play a 'formative' (as opposed to 'informative' role), shaping our intuitive understanding of the world.[71]

Whether myths are communicated orally, by being read, or as images, we understand both the expressor and the receptor of the myth as actively

[65] Frontisi-Ducroux 2003: 93, and see also Frontisi-Ducroux 2017: 19. Ovid's descriptions of metamorphosis, she argues, offer a particular exception to this approach, providing elegant evocations of experience (Frontisi-Ducroux 2003: 92–93).

[66] Buxton 2009: 36–37.

[67] Calame 2001; 2003: esp. 29–34 and 86; and 2009.

[68] Iles Johnston 2018: 80–81.

[69] In this approach, I differ from what I understand to be a more passive and mentally based understanding of myth as a reflective form of cognition, as described by Larson (2016: 13). Although she notes that this form of cognition may also 'embrace[s] and incorporate[s] intuitive inferences' about the gods, the cognitive processes of the audience may appear from such a description only to operate in one direction, with reflective cognition drawing (sometimes) on more intuitive approaches to the gods. In such a description, the role of the teller is almost subsumed, appearing to be only a vehicle for this flow of myth; while the audience receives from myth (84) 'a reflective, theological speculation about Zeus' but does not appear to engage in that speculation. The model seems notably static, not indicating how, if at all, such intuitive and more reflective processes might interact to provoke change in ritual practice/belief.

[70] Eidinow and Ramirez 2016.

[71] Landy 2012. Iles Johnston (2018: 82–83) also cites Landy's work, to argue for the role of myth in heightening belief in the gods in a mode of thought that develops, as it becomes more familiar.

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participating in the development of meaning.[72] One way to approach this is to look to the storyworld of a narrative. Told as local tales, a myth has the potential to incorporate deixis, so the speaker can refer to objects immediate to the situation of the speaker and audience, thus drawing an audience into the storyworld of the myth.[73] But, in addition, we might also draw on the ways in which other aesthetic experiences, such as reading, mobilize the body's mirror neurons so that the listening body 'experiences' the story that is being told, incorporating its own previous sensorimotor experiences and understandings, formed over time, to generate meanings. This 'embodiment of myth' is manifest when this body of stories comes to rest in, and interact with, the human bodies that witness them. Cognitive accounts of the sensorimotor simulation that occurs while we hear or read a story reveal to us how, as humans, these stories will invoke experience and environment in our minds; they will prompt emotional responses; they will draw us to inhabit salient relationships. Among the dynamics that model a tale's telling are familiar schemas and scripts, which shape the experience of the narration of a mythic story.[74] The familiar mythemes that we recognize are common schemas: these provide patterns that enable us to plug gaps in narratives, to work out events for ourselves, and so to find embodied meaning.

But if our brain's body-maps can stage the 'as-if' experiences of storied others—their emotions, their body states—then what do bodies do when we hear about ancient metamorphoses? Often with violence and extreme emotions at their core, these tales evoke experiences that may be familiar, and may, in turn, reinforce familiar scripts—but then invoke transformations far beyond mundane experience. They seem to set the body in a very different relationship with the cosmos and the elements that comprise it, raising questions about the perceived nature of the body, and the risks to it and from it. What bodily states do we map if we

[72] E.g., Bakker (1993: 15) explores how a performer of epic poetry re-enacts the past in order to recreate it in the present, posing as an eyewitness in order to provide a description of things that they have seen and (24) draws attention to the ways in which the power to realize the past in the present is attributed to the power of the Muse(s), who give poets the ability 'to transform private images into powerful public speech' because the Muses have been 'eyewitnesses, in the reality to be reenacted'. This approach emphasizes the role of performance. More recently, enactivist analyses emphasize how audiences may engage in an embodied simulation of imagery that we read or sense through exteroception or kinesthetic senses; see for example, Gallese and Wojciehowski 2011; Kuzmičová 2012; Caracciolo 2013 for embodied and enactivist theories. For examples of their use in analysing ancient evidence see, for example, Grethlein, Huitink, and Tagliabue 2020 on epic; Budelmann and Sluiter 2023 on drama; Eidinow 2018 on oracular consultation.

[73] Delattre's (2013) analysis of aitiology has provided a neat insight into one example of how this may work, which is useful beyond that specific story pattern. He challenges received explanations of the role of this form of mythic pattern as 'a search for causes' to argue that such narratives offer two complementary components that are connected through an identification process. As Delattre (2013: 46) explains, the aitiology 'est un discours d'autorité, où l'*αἰτία*, « cause » ou « origine », apparaît comme la concrétisation d'un autre concept, l'*ἀρχή*, le « principe », entendu à la fois comme origine temporelle (*principium temporis*), et comme garantie narrative.'

[74] Eidinow 2011, 2015.

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cannot experience the body itself in those ways: how are we to understand these stories of metamorphosis?

My suggestion is that perhaps we may better understand these stories and their implications if we start from the body—as it was understood in the ancient Greek cultures in which the narrative patterns of these stories were developing. Just as the stories themselves were being written down in the Archaic and Classical periods, so, too, were texts about the body. I suggest that we can see parallels—stories of metamorphosis set human bodies into the landscapes around them; philosophical and medical texts describe the body as comprising the same elements as make up those surrounding landscapes. In what follows, I will first explore what ancient Greek sources indicate about the composition of the human body and its interrelations with its surrounding landscape; then, in the final section, I will explore what this may have meant for perceptions of the body as an object both of and at risk.

Embodied Elements

From early poetry to mythic stories to more 'scientific' treatises of Greek culture, we can trace how discussion and description of the bodies of mortals are underpinned by assumptions and theories about the interactions of corporeal and physical matter. We can see this in a range of ancient literature, from, for example, the world-building theories of the philosophers, to the medical treatises of the so-called Hippocratics to the insights of characters in ancient drama. To begin this investigation, I start by exploring the role of the elements in the composition of the cosmos, as expressed in ancient Greek myth/philosophy, before moving on to examine the ways in which the human body was understood to interact with these fundamental elements, and, finally, reflecting on the key role played by the experience of intense emotions and traumatic events in those interactions.

The emphasis in the earliest cosmogonical poems lies heavily on the role of light and dark, with earth and sky as associated generative principles. These are just some of a number of underlying oppositions (e.g., right/left, male/female) that seem to have been used to understand and explain the structure of the world; but such schemas were far from systematic or uniform.[75] In these early poems, the different powers and forces of the environment are depicted as persons with supernatural powers; creation and destruction occur because of their individual desires and the complex histories of their families. It was perhaps in competition with such poetic explanations that the natural philosophers developed a set of

[75] As interpreters of the thought of this ancient culture, we need to be careful about imposing too strict a system of thought on the evidence—as suggested by the recent reconsideration of the colour of animals sacrificed to Olympian and Chthonian gods (see Scullion 1994; Parker 2011: 83, 284–6).

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theories that rather stressed the role of the kind of stuff that makes up the world around us—earth, air, fire, and water—describing how these changed, largely (although not always) in terms of mechanical operations that could also be observed.[76] The natural philosophers offered a range of different cosmological ingredients or building blocks, and a variety of configurations and dynamics.[77] Their approaches can be further categorized: those philosophers who came before Parmenides tended to create systems that posited one key generative material, which was transformed into and out of the other elements;[78] those who came after, understood there to be a number of different elements that interacted.[79]

From our evidence, we can identify one Thales of Miletos as the earliest of these philosophers, active around the beginning of the sixth century. He seems to have selected water as the primary element and origin of all things.[80] Anaximander (also of Miletos) was likely to have been influenced by Thales' approach, since he seems to have inherited something of the same paradigm:[81] he understood generation to occur from 'the boundless'—*to apeiron*—a part of which separates off to form a series of opposites. His imagery is biological: he describes the coming-to-be of the world order as a process by which something of the everlasting 'generative of the hot and cold separated off' and then a sphere of flame surrounded the air around the earth—like bark around a tree.[82] This suggests that his opposites, the nature of which is unclear, appear to have been envisaged as, or in terms of, familiar elements:[83] earth, air, and fire are mentioned here; water occurs in other fragments that describe the state of the world.[84] As to how these interact, the generally accepted interpretation of his only surviving fragment is that it describes changes of opposites coming-to-be out of one another.[85] Anaximander models the workings of the cosmos using a legalistic metaphor of justice: 'according to what must be: for they

[76] Graham 2006: esp. 95–104.

[77] In what follows, I draw heavily on the interpretations of Graham (2006), using the texts and translations of Graham (2010). My discussion here is not intended to be a comprehensive analysis of the philosophies of the Presocratics that I have selected; rather, I am looking to demonstrate that their worldviews described the world in terms of interacting elements and that this perspective encompassed the human body as well as the environment.

[78] Graham (2006: 85–112), calls this the 'Generating Substance Theory' or GST, distinguishing it from the standard explanatory theory of 'material monism' for which most scholars (following Aristotle) have argued (as Graham 2006: 20–22).

[79] Graham 2006: 186–223.

[80] Kirk, Raven, and Schofield 1983: 76 for date, and 88–99 for cosmological arguments.

[81] Graham 2006: 4–5 for Thales' influence on Anaximander.

[82] Graham 2010 (1), Anaximander F19 (= DK 12 A10 = Plut. *Miscellanies* 2).

[83] Graham 2010 (1), Anaximander F14 (= DK 12 A9 = Simplicius *Phys.* 150.24–25) states that they are hot, cold, dry, moist, and the rest.

[84] Graham 2010 (1), Anaximander F36 (= DK 12 A27 = Aetius 3.16.1) which describes the sea as what is left of the original moisture, which was largely dried out by fire.

[85] Graham 2010 (1), Anaximander F9 (= DK 12 B1 = Simplicius *Phys.* 24.17). The generally accepted interpretation developed by Kahn (1960) but anticipated as Graham 2006: 34 notes, by Vlastos (1947).

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give recompense and pay restitution to each other for their injustice according to the ordering of time'.[86] Similarly, Alkmaion of Kroton understood the balance of powers in the body in terms of a political metaphor: health was a result of *isonomia*, while sickness was *monarchia*, in which one power dominates.[87] But, as Daniel Graham stresses, Anaximander's model is not about civic political arrangements, but rather about the injustice arising from the movement of possessions:[88] moreover, it is one of ongoing serial strife between the opposites; it is this ongoing process of penalty and retribution that creates what is.[89] Some commentators suggest that this is modelled on observation and experience of the seasons, and/or the interactions of earth, sun, mist.[90] This may then help to understand the role of time in Anaximander's system: the interchange of opposites through the seasons, over the period of day/night—according to the 'assessment of time'.[91] Thus, Anaximander seems to have understood the origin of the world, and its ongoing maintenance, as closely modelled on observation of the elements of the world, with those elements becoming and unbecoming each other on some sort of corrective, cyclic system that ensured balance between them.

While we do not know the processes that governed the mechanics of Anaximander's system, those of Anaximenes (again, of Miletos) are much clearer. His originative substance was air, which changed through processes of condensation and rarefaction—and it is this process of change for which he is most well known.[92] In his process, according to Simplicius, fire was the result of air thinning; and when it condensed it became wind, cloud, then water, and earth, and then stones.[93] The philosopher appears to have envisaged an ongoing process, but also one that built on a familiar and mundane manufacturing method—that of felting.[94] In fact, he even seems to have extended this idea to describe the movement of the heavens—as being like a felt cap turning around a head.[95]

The other Ionians also described systems of opposites: Xenophanes of Kolophon understood the worlds to arise from a process of alternating dry and wet periods. I say 'worlds' because, as earth became mud and then was dried out,

[86] Trans. Graham 2010 (1), Anaximander F9 (= DK 12 B1 = Simplicius *Phys*. 24.17).
[87] DK 24 B4 = Aetius 5.30.1.
[88] Graham 2006: 36. He compares Thucydides 3.82–84; and we might also think of the difficulties created by *eris*, as envisaged by Hesiod in the *Works and Days* (11–30).
[89] Graham (2006: 37) describes it as 'serial injustice'; here we might also recall the work of Theognis, much of which is concerned with a sense of (political/civic) injustice.
[90] Graham 2006: 35 and Kirk, Raven, and Schofield 1983: 120.
[91] Indeed, he also appears to have described these elements in action with/against each other in reports of his analysis of weather events. For example, he described wind as 'a rush of air when the most fine and moist parts of it are moved or dissolved by the sun.' See Graham 2010 (1), F32 (= Aetius P 3.7.1 = DK 12 A24).
[92] Graham 2006: 45–84.
[93] Graham 2010 (1), Anaximenes F3 (= DK 13 A5 = Simplicius *Physics* 24.26–25.1).
[94] Graham 2010 (1), Anaximenes F12 (= DK 13 A7 = Hippolytus *Refutation* 1.7.3).
[95] Graham 2010 (1), Anaximenes F12 (= DK 13 A7 = Hippolytus *Refutation* 1.7.6).

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the human race—made of earth and water[96]—became extinct and then was made again.[97] He seems to state that it is earth that is the key substance in his cosmogony: 'For from earth are all things and into earth do all things die.'[98] On the other hand, his theory of change appears to depend on water, specifically the sea, which he describes as 'the source of water, the source of wind…the begetter of clouds and winds and rivers.'[99]

Herakleitos (of Ephesos) is the first to refer explicitly to four opposites, which are described as the hot, the cold, the dry, and the wet: 'Cold things warm up, what is hot cools down, what is wet dries out, what is dry grows moist.'[100] These are fundamentally the "turnings" (*tropai*) of his key generative element, fire: 'The turnings of fire: first sea, and of sea half is earth, half fireburst.'[101] Like Anaximander, Herakleitos also saw strife as necessity: he appears to have deliberately corrected Anaximander when he observed that 'strife is justice.'[102] And he understood a similar process involved in that strife: the opposites must pay recompense to each other. The changes are transformational: 'For souls it is death to become water, for water death to become earth, but from earth water is born, and from water soul';[103] 'The death of fire is the birth of air, and the death of air the birth of water.'[104]

All of these are working with an idea of 'the coming to be and perishing of the basic substances', with, especially after the work of Herakleitos, the 'serial birth and death of elements the driving force of the cosmos.'[105] But, while contraries play a part in most of these theories, and some indeed demonstrate dualistic features, none of them holds that dualism is a basic fact.[106] It was Parmenides (of Elea, S. Italy) who introduced a fundamental dualism when he began his *Way of Seeming* with two

[96] Graham 2010 (1), Xenophanes F50 (= DK 21 B29 = Philoponus *Physics* 125.27–32) and Graham 2010 (1), Xenophanes F51 [F29] (= DK 21 B33 = Sextus Empiricus *Against the Professors* 10.314).

[97] Graham 2010 (1), Xenophanes F59 (= DK 21 A33 = Hippolytus *Refutation* 1.14.5–6).

[98] Graham 2010 (1), Xenophanes F46 (= DK 21 B27 = Theodoret *Therapy for Greek Diseases* 4.9).

[99] Trans. Graham 2010 (1), Xenophanes F55 (= DK 21 B30 = Geneva scholium on *Iliad* 21.196).

[100] Graham 2010 (1), Herakleitos F86 [F55] (= DK 22 B126 = Tzetzes *On the Iliad* 126); Graham 2010: 170.

[101] Trans. Graham 2010 (1), Herakleitos F51 [F30] (= DK 22 B31 = Clement of Alexandria *Miscellanies* 5.104.3–5); and see also 'All things are an exchange for fire, and fire for all things, as goods for gold and gold for goods' (trans. Graham 2010 (1), Herakleitos F55 [F33] (= DK 22 B90 = Plutarch *On the 'E' at Delphi* 338d–e). While these are not equivalent, they become equivalent, because '<Earth> is liquefied as sea and measured into the same proportion it had before it became earth' (trans. Graham 2010 (1), Herakleitos F51 [F31] (= DK 22 B31 = Clement *Miscellanies* 5.104.3–5).

[102] Trans. Graham 2010 (1), Herakleitos F58 [F36] (= DK 22 B80 = Origen *Against Celsus* 6.42).

[103] Trans. Graham 2010 (1), Herakleitos F101 [F64] (= DK 22 B36 = Clement of Alexandria *Miscellanies* 6.17.2).

[104] Trans. Graham 2010 (1), Herakleitos F52 [F32a] (= DK 22 B76b = Plutarch *On the 'E' at Delphi* 392c).

[105] Quotation from Graham 2006: 185.

[106] Graham 2006: 170. As he notes, the theories of Xenophanes, where water and earth are basic substances with some contrary features, may be a counterexample, but he suggests that these are understood to be able to turn into one another and so 'the apparent dualism turns out to be much more like a Heraclitean contrast than a Parmenidean dualism…they likely constitute different stages in a unified system.'

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equal substances, Light and Night.[107] For Parmenides, 'problems with the concept of generation point the way to a theory of cosmic generation based on ungenerated substances with permanent properties.'[108] And following Parmenides, the neo-Ionians develop theories that involve entities that we would identify as elements, which stay in their own substance, not moving from one to the other.[109] Thus, for example, Anaxagoras describes a mix of opposites—wet and dry, hot and cold, bright and dark—but also other substances.[110] And, indeed, he has to do this, because his primary theory is that 'everything is in everything' and so he imagines a cosmos in which there is a basic substance for every phenomenally distinct substance.[111] In turn, Empedokles (from Akragas, Sicily) identifies earth, air, fire, and water: his 'four roots'.[112] These are shaped by the coming together of everything, under the power of Love, and the shattering of everything, separated out (to form the cosmos) under the power of Strife.[113]

Crucially, while these philosophers may appear to cast their opposites in terms of powers, they deal, in their explanations, with concrete substances and human relationships, not abstract powers.[114] While, at one level, these writings are concerned with building vast cosmic arguments, at another level, they are drawing from—and are often formulated in terms of—mundane experiences, implicitly and sometimes explicitly evoking imagery from the world around them. Importantly for this study, when they consider human bodies, they involve them in their visions of world making and its matter. Anaximander sees humans incubated from fishes or something similar, which 'arose when the water and land were warmed', and emerged from them when those animals burst.[115] Xenophanes seems to have understood that humans, like all things in his cosmogony, were formed of earth and water[116]—and humans would be destroyed in the cyclical return to water.[117] Herakleitos saw humans emerge from a process instigated by Strife—'some he

[107] Graham 2010 (1), Parmenides F20 [F9] (= DK 28 B9 = Simplicius *Physics* 180.9–12).
[108] Graham 2006: 170.
[109] See the analysis of the elemental substance theory in Graham (2006: 224–226).
[110] Graham 2010 (1), Anaxagoras F26 [F4] (= DK 59 B4(b) = Simplicius *Physics* 34.21–26, 156.4–9).
[111] Graham 2006: 198: his substances do not combine to form compounds; rather, one substance becomes manifest as it separates out from another…and matter is infinitely divisible—so that however small an amount of a substance, it can contain trace elements of all kinds of matter.
[112] Graham 2010 (1), Empedokles F26 [F9] (= DK 31 B6 = Aetius P 1.3.20.1–3; Sextus *Against the Professors* 9.362, 10.315); Stobaeus 1.10.11; Hippolytus *Refutation* 7.29.4, 10.7.3; Eusebius *Preparation for the Gospel* 14.14.6; Diogenes Laertius 8.76. Again, caution is needed with our interpretation of the status of these opposites and elements, as Vallance (2016 *s.v.* 'Elements') notes: we learn about these ideas of the elements of the physical world chiefly from Aristotle who attributes to these philosophers a series of inquiries concerning 'that from which things first came, that into which they finally resolve, and that which persists even though modified by actions performed upon it' (*Metaph.* 983b7); however, it is unclear whether the early philosophers themselves had these questions in mind.
[113] See Graham 2010 (1), Empedokles F29 (= DK 31 A28 = Simplicius *Physics* 25.21–31).
[114] See Graham 2006: 67.
[115] Graham 2010 (1) Anaximander F38 (= Censorinus 4.7).
[116] Graham 2010 (1), Xenophanes F50 (= DK 21 B29 = Philoponus *Physics* 125.27–32) and Graham 2010 (1), Xenophanes F51 [F29] (= DK 21 B33 = Sextus Empiricus *Against the Professors* 10.314).
[117] Graham 2010 (1), Xenophanes F59 (= DK 21 A33 = Hippolytus *Refutation* 1.14.5–6).

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manifested as gods, some as men; some he made slaves, some free.'[118] For Anaxagoras, humans—like everything in his vision of the world—comprise everything: 'For he said that all things are mixed with each other, and as they increase they are segregated. For example, in the same seed there are hair, nails, veins, arteries, sinews, and bones, and although they happen to be invisible because of their microscopic size, as they grow they gradually become distinct.'[119] And Empedokles seems to have envisioned bodies as comprising parts made up of different elements;[120] indeed, the body parts of animals themselves came together in multiple random ways, a process that gradually rationalized with each generation.[121] This seems, from other parts of his writing, to be in response to the environment—so, for example, we are told that he argued that 'male and female come to be by hot and cold…the first males were born in the earth more towards the east and south, the first females towards the north';[122] and the nature of what they become is related to the balance of the elements of which they are composed.[123]

These philosophical ideas are useful for understanding something of the worldview of the ancients in their approach to the nature of the elements, their relationship to each other, to the cosmos, and to other living beings—human and animal.[124] And if we then turn to the ancient medical writers, we see these ideas about the composition of humans further developed, in allusions to some very specific interrelations between the landscape itself and the human body. For example, the Hippocratic treatise, *Airs, Waters and Places*, provides one clear account of the role of fresh water in physical and mental health; its particular characteristics—and their impacts—depends, as we have seen, on its interactions with other elements within a particular environment.[125] Thus, marshy, standing, or stagnant waters allow for no movement of the water, and no 'outflow'(*aporruta*); springs from rocks, from earth where there are hot waters or particular metals are found, are hard, heating waters, a result of the violence of heat. In contrast, the best waters flow from high places (near the sun) but deep from the earthy hills. Mortal physiology and these different water types interact, the body's characteristics responding to those of the water:[126]

> A person in health and strength needs to make no choice, but can always drink whatever is available, but a person who because of disease wishes to drink the

[118] Graham 2010 (1), Herakleitos F59 [F37] (= DK 22 B53 = Hippolytus *Refutation* 9.9.4).
[119] Trans. Graham 2010 (1), Anaxagoras F28 (DK 59 B10 = Scholium on Gregory of Nazianzus 36.911).
[120] Graham 2010 (1), Empedokles F116 (= DK 31 A78 = Aetius P 5.22.1).
[121] Graham 2010 (1), Empedokles F121 [F75] (= DK 31 B61 = Aelian *On Animals* 16.299) and F122 (= DK 31 A72 = Aetius P 5.19.5).
[122] Graham 2010 (1), Empedokles F147 (=Aetius P 5.7.1).
[123] Graham 2010 (1), Empedokles F122 (= DK 31 A72 = Aetius P 5.19.5).
[124] Zatta (2019) has made a compelling argument for consideration of the interrelationship of humans and animals in the evolution of living beings in the theories of the Presocratic philosophers.
[125] Hippoc. *Aer.* 7.
[126] Hippoc. *Airs, Waters and Places* 7.32 (trans. Potter 2022).

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> most suitable water will secure health best by doing the following. Persons whose cavities are constipated and liable to become inflamed benefit from the sweetest, lightest and most sparkling of waters. But those whose cavities are soft, moist, and phlegmatic, benefit from the hardest, most refractory, and salty of waters, for in this way they would best be dried up.

The perception of this interaction of environment, body, and liquids persists. Vitruvius writing (in the first century BCE) about architecture reflects on how:

> the human body is in part earthy, and at the same time contains humours of many kinds blood, milk, sweat, urine, and tears; if, therefore, in a small particle of the earthy there is found such a discrepancy of flavours, we need not wonder if in the expanse of earth there shall be found such innumerable varieties of juices. The watery energy passing along their channels is tinctured with them when it reaches the outflow of the springs. Thus for this reason springs are rendered disparate and various in their several kinds, because of the divergence of localities and the qualities of regions and the unlike qualities of soils.[127]

He draws on the writings of 'Theophrastos, Timaeus, Posidonios, Hegesias, Herodotus, Aristides, and Metrodorus' to show how the 'properties of localities, the virtues of different waters, and by reference to climate, the distribution of regional qualities' are conditioned by the inclination of the heavens.[128]

External manifestations of air were also imagined as interacting with the environment and its inhabitants in another way—as winds. Winds shaped sea and land, and, in Greek eyes, they also shaped the land's inhabitants: their body, their health, and, as a result, their character. Alongside the atmospheric role of *aer*, a number of treatises in the Hippocratic Corpus identify the ways in which a particular wind may exert such effects.[129] The writer of the treatise *On Breaths* saw wind as the key to the spread of all disease; particular winds, associated with the principles of hot and dry, for example, were associated with specific kinds of illnesses. And, of course, there were animate winds: Hesiod in the *Theogony* describes how Astraios weds Eos and produces the three winds Zephyros, Boreas, and Notos, and, while Boreas and Zephyros are the only winds named in Homer as appearing to receive cult, there is extensive evidence for cults relating to other local winds; by contrast, as I have argued, there is strikingly little evidence for myths about winds.[130]

Like the philosophers, the medical writers also draw on similar associations of opposites: in the Hippocratic Corpus, the treatise *On the Nature of Man* argues that it is only when the opposites hot, cold, wet, and dry are balanced correctly

[127] Vitruv. *De Arch.* 8.3.26 (trans. Granger 1934).
[128] Vitruv. *De Arch.* 8.3.27 (trans. Granger 1934).
[129] *aer*: see pp. 69–70.
[130] Hes. *Theog.* 378–380; Hom. *Il.* 23.192–198; see Eidinow 2019.

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that generation can occur. Some then make certain associations between these abstract qualities and physical elements. *On Regimen* 1 argues that all living things are composed of Fire (hot and dry) and Water (cold and wet).[131] Outside the Hippocratic Corpus, Philistion of Locri Epizephyrii seems also to have posited four elements: fire, earth, air, and water (and the relating qualities hot and dry, cold and moist).[132] In all their variety, these treatises still seem to share an understanding that both humans, individually and as groups, and the world in which they live, can be thought of as living beings, composed of similar essential qualities or substances, which need to be held in balance in order for the world, the body politic, and the body of the individual to work successfully.[133] And, similarly, the idea that excessive emotions, desires, and appetites might be a result of, and an influence on, changing the nature of body, is also a key aspect of these narratives.

These kinds of theories are expounded in later philosophers, for example, in some detail in Plato's *Timaeus*, which depicts body and soul, and cosmos and soul as comprising the same stuff, refined as fire, earth, air, and water. These elements are in constant motion, and as a result, humans must also remain in motion in order to maintain the balance of these different elements and their effects. The relation of these ideas to earlier myths of metamorphosis is suggested in Timaeus' final discussion of the formation of different creatures that inhabit the earth: including birds, 'derived by transformation, growing feathers in place of hair, from men who are harmless but light-minded'.[134] Certainly there is a pointed observation being made here about philosophical rivals: in the case of birds, these are men who 'who, being students of the worlds above, suppose in their simplicity that the most solid proofs about such matters are obtained by the sense of sight';[135] while wild animals are those 'who have paid no attention at all to philosophy nor studied at all the nature of the heavens, because they ceased to make use of the revolutions within the head and followed the lead of those parts of the soul which are in the breast.'[136] But this should not conceal that the process of transformation depicted as plausible is understood to arise from an imbalance of the body/mind, one which, we have been told, throws out of proportion the elements within the body, prompting change.

In this account, woman is clearly a different kind of being from man, and the story of her creation is the first of the birds, animals, and fish, marking her as different. In his account of the creation of mortal women, Timaeus only draws attention to the making of the womb, and its role in generating appetites, and illness

[131] Although the ambivalence concerning dry and wet is seen in the writer's acknowledgement that there is moisture in fire and dryness in water (see Hippoc. *On Regimen 1* 4.1–10).

[132] Anonymus Londinensis 20.25 preserves Philistion's argument that disease may be caused by an imbalance of these elements, although other theories are also posited, including the blockage of internal airways or physical trauma (see Vallance 2016).

[133] See Wright 1995: 56–74.

[134] Pl. *Tim.* 91d (trans. Bury 1929).

[135] Pl. *Tim.* 91e (trans. Bury 1929).

[136] Pl. *Tim.* 91e (trans. Bury 1929).

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(when those needs are not requited).[137] Nevertheless, the initial figures of this account—the nurse of becoming, and the craftsmen—establish from its beginning a strong perception of the female as characterized by movement and change, which we find in other sources. And from other evidence we also gather a different, more specific sense of the elemental make-up of women.

Stories about the creation of woman emphasize her environmental component: the first woman is crafted by Hephaistos from earth and water.[138] Her appearance on the human scene crucially changes man's relationship with his environment: as Giulia Sissa has observed, the beginning of womanhood and the 'addition of femininity' is understood to mean 'the loss of divinity in the history of human life';[139] woman introduces both sexuality and along with it 'disquiet, curiosity and suffering.'[140] Woman brings desire—both her own physical and emotional needs, and the desire and need of others for her, as a woman.[141]

For a less philosophical rendition of similar ideas, we can turn to the extant poem of the seventh-century writer, Semonides of Amorgos, which provides a vivid and cruel description of different behaviours ascribed to women, portrayed mostly in terms of the characteristics of particular animal species. There are two exceptions—a woman fashioned from earth and a woman from the sea. While some have seen here the influence of Hesiod's portrayal of Pandora—Loraux provides a detailed analysis of the intertextuality between the two poems[142]—as Fraenkel first observed, there are also traces in this poem of the influence of Ionian elemental theory: 'It is obvious that here a cosmological system is reflected according to which two basic substances, or qualities, make up the whole of the universe… Earth is the negative, passive and more material element… The positive element, sea, on the other hand, is distinguished by an excess of wilful spontaneity.'[143]

Here this theory is used to contrast male and female, to make particular and abusive points about certain characteristic behaviours of women. Robin Osborne

[137] Pl. *Tim.* 91c (trans. Bury 1929).

[138] Hes. *Op.* 60–61 (earth and water), 70 (earth) and *Theog.* 570–571 (earth); see further discussion at the beginning of the case study Fire, pp. 110–114.

[139] Sissa 2008: 76, referring to Hesiod's ages and Plato *Statesman* 272a.

[140] Sissa 2008: 74.

[141] Sissa (2008: 79) illuminates Plato's further articulation of these ideas: 'As Hesiod said, the first woman would not content herself with poverty and would avidly seek repleteness. In Plato's opinion, this compulsion corresponds exactly to insatiable desire: a desire that did not exist among the homogenous original men, before the advent of the first unmanly beings, women.'

[142] Loraux 1981: 75–117.

[143] Fraenkel 1938: 332. Fraenkel dated Semonides' poem to the seventh century and so suggested that the unknown authority behind Semonides might be identical with Thales, but also recognised the sea had an identical position in the system of Anaximander. Hubbard (1994: 175–181) prefers a sixth century date for Semonides' poem, and (181–189) sees parallels between Semonides' approach and the theories of both Anaximander and more specifically Xenophanes. In particular, he observes (183) that the fragment of Alkmaion of Kroton (B4 DK, see above p. 17) in which he deals with the alternation of dry and wet and cold and hot for the human organism is likely to have been influential for Semonides' portrayal.

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has argued that it was primarily aimed at a symposiastic male audience: as a sympotic poem, it does not belong to that literary context 'in which the whole basis of human relationships to the gods is under examination.'[144] It is true that this poem is manifestly about appetites and desires: each of this great variety of women in different ways demonstrates a consistent lack of control. In his summary of the general nature of women, Semonides notes how a woman's presence in a house means that hunger will never be quickly expelled; and, indeed, the majority of these descriptions are of women concerned with appetite—either for food or for sex.[145] Their demands never end; they are always in a state of wanting. Sissa has drawn attention to the ways in which desire or *eros* creates a constant flux, 'the pernicious boundlessness of insatiability'.[146]

I want to suggest here that this notion of insatiability, which creates such instability, is part of a set of ancient understandings about the make up of the mortal self and its interactions with the social and natural environment, which underpin not only the vicious satire of Semonides, but are also present in the theories of the medical writers, and the philosophical account of Plato's *Timaeus*.[147] It is also a significant element in stories of metamorphosis, in which bodies, consumed by emotions, interact with their surrounding landscapes. We find it particularly highlighted by later writers, including Ovid, whose stories of metamorphosis, as others have noted, often focus on 'moral problems'.[148] It is a clue—I believe—to a view of the world, of humans and their experiences, that helps to explicate the role of emotions in stories of metamorphosis, where social and physical, cosmological and individual interact in such startling moments of transformation—and pose such risks.

Emotional Risks

Myths, while they are narratives at one level concerned with the physical environment, also transcend everyday experience, to encompass the 'discursive and

[144] Osborne 2001b: 53; he explores the allusions in Semonides' work to Hesiod and the *Homeric Hymns* to Demeter and Aphrodite, and, while he states that Semonides has no interest in the themes of production and reproduction and little interest in the relationship between man and the gods (53), later in his analysis (60) he traces the power of these allusions to Hesiod's ideas (e.g., 'what [Semonides] does with Hesiod is the high culture end of his more general exercise in textual power that is also an exercise in sexual power').

[145] Hunger never swiftly expelled: Sem. 7. 100–102. Food: the Earth woman and the Ass woman, while the Sow woman grows fat, suggesting an appetite for food, although this is not made explicit. The Weasel woman steals and eats up sacrifices unburned, which suggests a perverted desire for food. Sex: the Weasel woman and the Mare woman. Neither: the Vixen woman (is critical); the Bitch woman (yaps); the Sea woman (shows a variable nature); the Monkey woman (is ugly and plotting harm).

[146] Sissa 2008: 205.

[147] Indeed, one of the reasons why this poem is so powerful, and indeed must have struck a subversive chord with its audience, is that, as we have seen elsewhere, it resonates with the explorations of the human condition (especially aspects of reproduction and relations) within these more divinely focused poems.

[148] Barchiesi 2024a: 7.

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ideological dimensions of place, the dreams, hopes, and fears of residents'; they offer 'deep maps' of a landscape.[149] These 'spatial narratives' tell us about the relationships between these phenomena, in particular, the metaphysical dangers that confront mortals. They can be described, in that sense, as 'riskscapes', 'mapping' the perceived hazards of a space, the risks that it encompasses—both those entities that threaten risk and those that are at risk.[150] These stories, we might say, reveal how men and women in myth become, in different ways, objects of and at risk.[151] And, while we might expect a clear division between the two, this is not necessarily so. Those figures who seem most at risk, may be viewed from another perspective as posing significant risk to themselves, their families, and their communities.

What kinds of risks are we considering in myths of metamorphosis? Above all, these stories let us know about transgressions against society and against the gods. We can better understand their nature if we invoke an ancient Greek concept—that of 'pollution' or *miasma*. This is a complex idea in the ancient Greek imaginary but, at its heart, it describes a particular nexus of relations between self and society, and between self, society, and the divine. Some pollutions were initiated simply through everyday life experiences—birth and death, for example—others were brought on through extreme actions, such as committing murder. But pollution might also be earned by offending a god. The causes of this were not always obvious, and communities often judged that they were polluted *because* they suffered some kind of disaster; for example, the plague afflicting Thebes at the beginning of Sophocles' play *Oedipus Tyrannos* is assumed to be caused by some pollution.[152] And while we are considering the concept of *miasma* we should also put alongside it the concept of '*agos*'. This term also described a particular relationship between a person and a god. It manifested in very similar ways to *miasma*, but rather than being about offence to the gods, it indicated being

[149] Bodenhamer, Corrigan and Harris 2015: 3.

[150] On 'spatial narratives' see Bodenhamer 2015: 12–14. This study draws on some aspects of the modern idea of a risk- or hazardscape, which posits that 'physical hazard exposure and social susceptibility to hazards must be understood within a geographic framework, that is, the hazardousness of a specific place' (as Cutter et al. 2000). Such a situated approach ensures a focus on the relationship between representations of hazards and the hazards themselves. Much of the work on risk-/hazardscapes, however, concentrates on the biophysical components of risk, even when cognitive and emotional aspects are acknowledged. For example, Cutter et al. (2000: 726) mention the role of 'certain beliefs and customs' in generating social vulnerability, and thus shaping riskscapes; but offer no further reflection. More recent work (Sutherland et al. 2012: 48) explores the cognitive aspect in more detail, noting how individuals 'carry the history of their place and their narratives with them, and that these in turn shape notions of risk and "riskscapes".'

[151] Cf. Boholm and Corvellec (2013: 38) who suggest taking risk as 'an epistemic category that organises empirical statements, concerning matters of danger, actor, action, value, and victim into configurations of meanings.' Boholm and Corvellec (2011: 176) invoke the 'relationship of risk linking two objects, a risk object and an object at risk, in a causal and contingent way so that the risk object is considered, in some way and under certain circumstances, to threaten the valued object at risk.'

[152] On *miasma* see Parker 1983; Soph. *OT* 95–98: Kreon reports to Oedipus the instruction of the Delphic oracle to drive out the *miasma* that is causing the plague.

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consecrated to them. In ancient texts it often occurs as the outcome of an oath—if a person breaks the oath they will become *enages*, that is 'in a state of *agos*'—or is understood as the outcome of a person committing sacrilege.[153]

Such perilous states of being afflicted with *miasma* or being *enages* were invisible, unable to be perceived by mortal eyes. It has been argued that this very invisibility is important, indicating the exceptional power of the gods.[154] It is also important because of what it meant for social relations: one way of identifying the presence of pollution was the occurrence of misfortune for an individual or their community. Even the suspicion of pollution, whether it was caused by the impersonal taint of certain social and biological processes, or arose from the response of an offended deity, was a source of risk for a community. To resolve this, purification rituals were required and perhaps also the removal of the polluted individual. In stories of metamorphosis, I suggest, we can see a reflection of these ideas: when a person is transformed, they enact the power of the divine; they are removed from their community; they make pollution visible. Such stories offer insights, at the social level, about acceptable relations with other people and with the gods; and, at the same time, they underline perceptions of the human imbrication with the materials of the cosmos itself.

But this is not just about physical matter: these stories also tell us something about the emotional dimensions of metamorphosis. If we read these stories for their affect, we may consider how they reflect something of our own experiences, when our bodies have felt as if they are rooted to the ground, turning to stone, dissolving into liquid, consumed by fire. These are relatively common descriptions of shared physical responses to the emotions prompted by unpleasant but not life-threatening events. In contrast, stories of metamorphosis describe extreme experiences of emotions as both prompts for and results of *actual* physical transformations. And, while there may not be corporeal changes involved, I want to suggest that we may also find parallels here with lived experience, notably, with the effects of extreme emotions or trauma on the mind and body.

In modern terms, descriptions of such experiences are relatively well known now beyond more specialist study: for example, the phrase 'fight or flight' is used widely to describe the overall responses of the body and mind to extreme emotions and traumatic events. Moving beyond that initial description, psychologists have identified a cascade of responses to traumatic events: 'Freeze-Flight-Fight-Fright-Flag-Faint'.[155] The response of an individual will depend on how they appraise the level of threat, and the potential for escape. In the first three stages,

[153] See discussion in Parker 1983: esp. 6–11 for the concept of *agos* and its overlap with *miasma*.
[154] Osborne 2011: 183.
[155] I draw in the summary that follows on Schauer and Elbert 2010.

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our bodies are activated and we are able to mobilize: our response is regulated by the sympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system. In 'Freeze' we may avoid a potential threat by remaining motionless, while we gather information; this may allow us to find an opportunity for 'Flight' from the danger, or to 'Fight' it. But if we remain in a state of arousal, unable to avoid the danger, then we start to enter the second three stages of response. The parasympathetic dominates, and we begin to lose our adaptivity to flee or fight. We start to become dizzy, drowsy, light-headed—our bodies become immobile and stiff ('tonic immobility'), although we may still be able to flee if there is a chance. As this goes on, however, we become increasingly dissociated, experiencing depersonalization and derealization ('Fright'); eventually our bodies become flaccidly immobile ('Flag') reaching a state of 'shut-down', perhaps even fainting ('Faint').

Once the danger has passed, these experiences may remain with us. Physiologically, our bodies have created a trauma-induced 'fear network':[156] prompted by cues in our environment, we may experience feelings, physical sensations, flashbacks, and memories from the traumatic event. We may re-experience our trauma responses: for example, sympathetic arousal, in the form of, say, hypervigilance—a sense that we must be constantly ready to fight unseen danger; or, led by the parasympathetic, dissociation, and a feeling of being detached from family, community, oneself.[157] If we have not processed overwhelming, traumatic experiences, we may only be able to express them as rage.[158] These repeated experiences may happen again and again, so that we feel 'stuck' in the traumatic event, although it has passed. We may not have actually physical changed our form, but what we have endured has changed us and changed our experience of the world around us.

I am not arguing that these detailed scientific analyses of the body's response to trauma map neatly onto evocations of embodied change in myths of metamorphosis. But I do want to suggest that these mythic tales captured and conveyed, and still do convey, something of the embodied experiences of responses to extreme emotions and traumatic experience. In these myths, the experiences lead not to the medicalization of the protagonists, but rather to their instantiation in both landscape and cosmos—as earth materials, or in changes relating to air, water, or fire. In the case studies that follow, which are categorized by these elements, I examine stories that relate to experiences of fright (in the case study, Earth), flagging and fainting (in the case study, Air), stories that evoke the experience of the fight response, and the experience of rage (in the case study, Fire).

[156] Schauer and Elbert 2010: 118–119.
[157] For detailed descriptions of the response of the body to trauma, see van der Kolk 2014 and Rothschild 2000.
[158] Parker Hall 2009: esp. ch. 7.

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The final case study, Water, explores, first, experiences of persistent memory, in stories of fresh water; and then, through myths relating to the sea, experiences of profound and startling transformations. Across all four cases studies, these myths recount responses to situations of profound and startling violence and intense emotion—ancient stories of bodies in metamorphosis.

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1
Earth

Introduction: Rooted

This first case study concerns stories about men and women who disappear by either becoming, or being replaced by, earth materials—rocks or stones. Some of these become part of the landscape, some of which remain recognizable; some become or are replaced by (stone) statues, some of which are placed in sanctuaries; some simply disappear into the ground. Alongside these, this case study also explores stories of men and women who become rooted in earth, that is, through metamorphoses into plants or trees.

Many of the petrification stories of Greco-Roman myth may, at first sight, be explained as providing aitiologies for physical features of the landscape—although, of course, myth takes this relationship to extraordinary scales.[1] As examples, we can offer the distinctively coloured pebbles on a beach of the island of Elba said to have once been the scrapings of sweat from the bodies of the Argonauts, fallen from their strigils;[2] or a stone that was once a snake, and before that was Harmonia, the wife of Kadmos, and is found near a town called Polai, possibly in Illyria;[3] or the rocky outcrop on Mount Sipylos in Lydia, the shape of which was explained by the story of the petrification of Niobe mourning her children, destroyed by the gods, who were offended because Niobe boasted of her own fertility;[4] or Atlas, transformed into a mountain by the sight of the head of Medusa, wielded by Perseus, after he refused to believe Perseus was a son of Zeus,

[1] Bubbe 1913: 23.

[2] Lyk. *Alex.* 874–876; Strabo 5.2.6.

[3] Callim. *Aet.* FF10 and 11 (Massimilla 1996 = 12 and 13 Pfeiffer 1956); on Polai, Lyk. *Alex.* 1022 with Hornblower 2015 ad loc.; for a full narrative of the metamorphosis, see Nonn. *Dion.* 110–118.

[4] Niobe's story is told by Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.5.6 (Frazer 1921): 'Being blessed with children, Niobe said that she was more blessed with children than Latona. Stung by the taunt, Latona incited Artemis and Apollo against them, and Artemis shot down the females in the house, and Apollo killed all the males together as they were hunting on Cithaeron. Of the males Amphion alone was saved, and of the females Chloris the elder, whom Neleus married. But according to Telesilla there were saved Amyclas and Meliboea, and Amphion also was shot by them. But Niobe herself quitted Thebes and went to her father Tantalus at Sipylus, and there, on praying to Zeus, she was transformed into a stone, and tears flow night and day from the stone.'

The schol. Hom. *Il.* 24.602–617 relates the rest of the story and notes that she can be seen on Phrygian Sipylos, shedding fountains of tears; Pausanias (1.21.5; 8.2.3) provides similar information, apparently describing a rock and a cliff; he says you can see the woman 'downcast and in tears' if you go further away, but not if you stand too close to it. Battos: 'The lookout of Battos': as described by Ant. Lib. *Met.* 23.

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and did not offer him hospitality.[5] Similar stories explain even the existence of whole islands: for example, Asteria, who, fleeing the pursuit of Zeus, becomes the island of Ortygia, later called Delos.[6]

But as others have noted, such explanations only take us so far in understanding what these stories may have meant to those who told and heard them. For a start, these stories seem to reverse the understanding of 'earth' that is more generally expressed in Greek myth. There, we find the idea that earth is productive or fertile: Gaia is the personification of 'Earth' and, alongside Chaos, she brings forth many of the divinities, abstract forces, and monsters that the Greeks understood as making up the world and its environment—as well as giving birth to the line of divinities that would end with the Olympian gods.[7] In turn, the idea that humans are made from earth materials is found across a variety of early Greek texts, from Greek poetry to the writings of the early philosophers. We can think of Pandora, described by Hesiod as being created by Zeus from a mixture of earth and water;[8] or the story of the Athenians as born from stones thrown by Deukalion and Pyrrha, two mortals who had survived a flood that had killed the rest of the human race.[9] In contrast, these stories seem to reverse that creative process, to turn living beings into substances that are silent and largely immobile. Some of the early natural philosophers may offer some helpful insights for understanding this process: Xenophanes, for example, seems to have argued that as earth became mud and then was dried out, the human race—made of earth and water[10]—became extinct and then was made again.[11] But this does not illuminate the stories of humans made of earth or of stone who continue to exist; moreover, it does not help to explain those stories of humans who are transformed into statues, or who disappear; or those who become plants, rooted in the ground.

[5] Atlas: see Ov. *Met.* 4.631–662 for the story of his rejection of Perseus (see also Rosati 2024a ad Ov. *Met.* 4. 631–638). As Buxton 2009: 200–201, the mountain has a number of *aitia* attached to it, which more or less anthropomorphize it: e.g., in Hom. *Od.* 1.52–54 Atlas holds the pillars that keep heaven and earth apart; in Hes. *Theog.* 517–520, he holds the sky; Aesch. *PV* 348–350 describes him as 'the column of sky and earth'; while Herodotos (4.184) locates the mountain in Libya (it is called the 'Pillar of the Sky'); see also Buxton 1992.

[6] In addition, the story of a wolf turned to stone was given as the place name of *Lukostomion* or *Lukoeides*: the story is given by the commentaries on Lyk. *Alex.* 901–902. In one version, while hunting, Peleus had involuntarily killed Aktor, son of Akastos and had given sheep in atonement; a wolf who ate the sheep was turned to stone by Thetis. In another version, Peleus had deliberately killed Phokos, son of Psamathe, who sent the wolf in punishment to attack the sheep; Thetis persuaded her to petrify the wolf.

[7] Hes. *Theog.* 126–159, 184–187, etc.

[8] Hes. *Op.* 63; see further on Pandora, pp. 50–51, and in the case study Fire, pp. 110–112.

[9] Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.7.2; see Hes. FF3, 5, 6, and 251 (Most 2018a); Akousilaos of Argos (*FGrH* 2 FF34–35; Pind. *Ol.* 9.41–46). See further below, pp. 49–50.

[10] Graham 2010 (1), Xenophanes F50 (= DK 21 B29 = Philoponus *Physics* 125.27–32) and Graham 2010 (1), Xenophanes F51 [F29] (= DK 21 B33 = Sextus Empiricus *Against the Professors* 10.314).

[11] Graham 2010 (1), Xenophanes F59 (= DK 21 A33 = Hippolytus *Refutation* 1.14.5–6); see further in the Introduction, pp. 17–18.

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As other scholars have noted, a number of themes seem to be fighting for our attention here, including gods, death, and punishment.[12] But while these raise useful questions, they do not seem to provide an effective sense of what these stories may have meant to those who told and heard them. In particular, we are left asking, in the context of mythic tales of metamorphosis, with the wide range of transformations available, why a story ends with a metamorphosis into earth, stone, statue, or plant. And so, in this case study, rather than starting from the symbolism of the story, I will start my analysis by focusing on the meaning of the transformation itself.

This case study will begin by examining the significance of different earth and stone substances, in particular the emotional resonances that they may be intended to convey in stories of petrifaction. It will explore this from two distinct directions: first, the cultural significance of emotions that seem to be associated with particular earthly materials; then, the ways in which earthly materials appear to be used by and across different authors in the representation of emotions. The final part of the chapter turns to stories of metamorphosis into trees and plants, examining how those tales about men and women who become rooted in the earth reflect some similar themes. It leads to a consideration of the emotional significance of these stories of 'rootedness', one that draws attention to what we may now recognize as a 'fright' response to extreme events and emotions. But to begin with, this case study explores some examples of the different versions of these petrifaction stories, investigating how different authors may use these story types for particular purposes, and/or how the key themes endure, like their subjects, over time and text.

Into Stone

Storied Stones

Stories of petrifaction are found in a broad range of ancient Greek sources, shaped to different genres by the particular skills of specific writers, and used for different authorial purposes. As an example, we can consider how the Homeric epics use metamorphosis. To begin with, the *Odyssey* plays more with the theme of metamorphosis than does the *Iliad*, and the types of physical transformation

[12] Forbes Irving 1990: 139. In a subtle but brief analysis, he argues for 'two possible approaches' to this material: (i) examining the 'peculiar relation of these stones to the gods and to death'; (ii) exploring these stories as 'metaphors for human behaviour', and the question of 'why petrifaction is an appropriate punishment for particular heroes'. But the extent to which those transformed are in fact to be considered as dead is ambiguous: these figures remain prominent; indeed, although he himself (142) argues that 'most heroes of petrifaction stories die rather than being translated', in fact his discussion makes it clear that this 'death' is if anything partial, since 'instead of descending to Hades they remain among us for all to see.'

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described in each poem reflect and reinforce its overriding themes.[13] In the *Odyssey*, themes of travel, experience, and resulting transformations are reflected in numerous examples of divine, human, and near-human metamorphoses that emphasize the gap between mortal and divine experiences of time and space.[14] Perhaps significantly, the poem offers only one example of petrifaction:[15] the fate that overtakes the ship of the Phaiakians that has delivered Odysseus home to Ithaca; traditionally, it becomes the island of Pontikonisi.[16]

Alkinoos, King of the Phaiakians, identifies this petrifaction as having been foretold in a prophecy given to the Phaiakians long ago: Poseidon, provoked into anger because they used to safely transport travellers, would punish them in this way. The event focuses the reader's mind on relevant themes: be careful which travellers you choose to help; ignore oracular messages at your peril. It shows that even the slightly superhuman Phaiakians are vulnerable to the power (and whims) of the divine.[17] The divine/mortal power dichotomy is made plain by this punishment: the mobility of the Phaiakians (described only a few lines earlier with an adverb often used of the gods' movement, *rimfa*, 'lightly' or 'swiftly') has been curtailed by the greater power of a god.[18] We can note that the familiar themes of the *Odyssey*—travel and transformation—are distorted here: the experience of the traveller, Odysseus, alters, in this instance, not him but the Phaiakians; moreover, rather than changing them as they advance on their journey, it holds them immobile, frozen in this particular experience.

Fated it may be, but the sequence of events that lead to the moment of change underlines the whimsical cruelty of the gods. Zeus advises his divine brother, as he contemplates his options: 'My dear brother, this is what seems best to my own heart. When all the people are looking out from the city and see the ship driving in, turn it into a rock close to land in the likeness of a fast ship, so that all men will wonder at it: and then surround their city with a great mountain.'[19] This (puzzling) episode describes the development of an implied or future *aition*. We, the poem's

[13] Buxton (2009: 48) argues that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* deal with the idea of death as the only way out of life in the same way. It seems to me that the *Iliad* presents a far more final and dour depiction of the end of life and generational endurance, while the *Odyssey* (famously) suggests a greater sense of human agency in the continuity of life and living.

[14] See Buxton 2009: 37–48; Hom. *Od.* 10.233–240.

[15] Humans/near-humans do not turn to stone; even Proteus (Hom. *Od.* 4.454–459) sticks to dynamic forms: a bearded lion, a snake, a panther, a mighty boar, running water, and a tall leafy tree. See further on Proteus in the case studies, Water (p. 146) and Fire (p. 108 n. 3).

[16] Hom. *Od.* 13.146–183.

[17] Bowie (2014 ad loc.) discusses comparative examples of divine anger and concern for honour across Greek and Mesopotamian epic, but then focuses on the question of whether or not it is appropriate to feel 'uncomfortable that the genial Phaeacians are made to suffer by Poseidon' in light of their apparently ignoring previous oracles. The text's manipulation of time, underscoring mortal misunderstanding of fated events, is emphasized by the uses of tenses and moods in Alkinoos' contemplation of the meaning of this oracle, already given, evidence of its current fulfilment and the possibilities of avoiding what must be about to come, by making sacrifices to Poseidon (Hom. *Od.* 13.178–183).

[18] Hom. *Od.* 13.162; this is a point made by Steiner 2001: 138.

[19] Hom. *Od.* 13.154–158 (trans. here and below Hammond 2000).

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audience, are given both a gods-eye view, and, at the same time, we experience the mortal bewilderment of the Phaiakians left standing in the port, wondering what has happened to the ship: 'The Phaeacians, masters of the long oar and famed for their ships, began to speak winged words to each other. A man would glance at his neighbour and say: "Oh, who has stopped our fast ship out in the sea as she was speeding home? Just now she was in full view".'[20] Here is a petrifaction that underlines the distance between gods and men; that draws attention to the overwhelming power of the divine over mortal life.

While metamorphosis in the *Iliad* may not reach into the areas explored in the *Odyssey*, nevertheless, that poem includes 'fantastic, divinely caused' examples, including two petrifactions.[21] Both clearly resonate with the *Iliad*'s pervasive themes of death, and, as with the scene in the *Odyssey*, they draw attention to divine power over human experience. But they are interestingly different in their narrative role, insofar as it is the moment of the transformation itself that offers a rich reflection for the poem. The first scene is Odysseus' later recollection of a portent that took place as the Greeks were gathering at Aulis. A snake eats a sparrow and her eight chicks, and is then turned to stone.[22] The scene is carefully described: the silent gliding forth of the snake 'blood-red on the back', from beneath the altar that the Greeks had set up, onto a plane tree beside it; the piteous twittering of the chicks as they are eaten, their mother fluttering impotently around them; and the final moment when the snake coils and pounces on the mother bird, catching her by the wing.

These details achieve a remarkable emotional intensity—before the scene itself simply stops, brought to a halt, like the snake itself, in the instance of metamorphosis, as it is turned to stone by Zeus.[23] As Odysseus reminds the Greek army, who are dispirited by Agamemnon's behaviour, Calchas, the seer of the Greek army, interprets the snake's metamorphosis as indicating the course of the Trojan War: the Greeks will take Troy in the tenth year of fighting.[24] And, once Calchas the seer has drawn out the parallel, in which the chicks and mother-bird become the city of Troy and its inhabitants, and the snake the Greek army, there is a disturbing condensation of the suffering to come. The emphasis on the word *tekna*, 'children', used to describe the baby birds, and the vivid description of their mother 'screaming about them', forcefully enacts the suffering that the women and children of the city will endure.[25]

[20] Hom. *Od.* 13.165–169.

[21] Buxton 2009: 47–49 (quotation, 48).

[22] Hom. *Il.* 2.308–320.

[23] Hom. *Il.* 2.319. The role of Zeus who both sends the snake and turns it to stone is important (as Kirk 1985 ad *Il.* 2.307–318) 'since only he could determine or recognise in advance the outcome of the war.'

[24] The retelling of the event by Ovid in the *Metamorphoses* (12.11–23) closely follows the Homeric version but also engages with the second book of Virgil's *Aeneid*, and Aeneas' account of the fall of Troy; cf. Musgrove 1997.

[25] *Tekna*: 2.311, 313, 315. Edmunds (1990: 25–29) notes that the phrase *nepia tekna* at 311 is used by Homer to describe situations where a mother and children are alone and in danger.

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In contrast, the moment of the snake's metamorphosis is described swiftly and simply: 'turned to stone' (*laan…ethēke*).[26] Terse and forceful, the description offers no hint of a visible process or intermediate step. Frontisi-Ducroux stresses how it is similar to descriptions of disappearance—one entity is simply gone, another entity then takes its place.[27] We can interpret this transformation as an unambiguous enactment of the implacability of Zeus' will. And although Calchas draws on the transformation to stress the never-ending fame that will accrue to the Greeks in victory, in fact, the power of the scene seems to lie elsewhere. Not only is this an event that emphasizes the power of the gods, it also underlines the suffering of war—and, perhaps, also its futility. The vitality of the sparrow and her chicks is snuffed out by the snake; but he, in turn, is reduced to stone, a transformation that extinguishes life. And there is also an ancient question raised at this point in the poem: while the manuscript tradition seems to read that Zeus made the snake *arizēlon* 'conspicuous' by turning him to stone, the ancient commentators seem to have read another word meaning 'unseen' (perhaps *aizēlon*), suggesting that the promise of fame for the Greeks, which Calchas claims, is not one that the gods intend should come to pass.

The question of the significance of the metamorphosis itself, rather than the way it changes the landscape, is also prompted by the other account of petrifaction in the *Iliad*. This is the tale of Niobe in her grief, told by the hero Achilles to Priam, who is mourning his son Hector whom Achilles killed; Achilles is trying to encourage Priam to eat—and he draws on the story of Niobe:[28]

> Even lovely-haired Niobe, you know, thought of food, and she had twelve children killed in her house, six daughters and six sons in the strength of their youth. [605] Apollo killed the sons with his silver bow, in anger at Niobe, and Artemis the archer-goddess killed the daughters, because Niobe would compare herself with beautiful Leto—she said Leto had two children only, but she herself had borne many. But those two, though they were only two, destroyed all her many. [610] For nine days they lay in their blood, and there was no-one to bury them, as the son of Kronos had turned the people into stones (*lithoi*): but on the tenth day the heavenly gods buried them. And Niobe thought of food, when she was worn out with her weeping. Now she is somewhere among the rocks

[26] The verb *tithēmi* used here is frequently employed in Homeric epic and elsewhere to describe a change of state, especially one created by a divine being. Also, the changes wrought by Kirke (Hom. *Od.* 10.338); and, in Aeschylus' *Suppliants* (299) of the change of Io by Hera, as Frontisi-Ducroux (2003: 185) observes. The petrified snake omen of the Greeks contrasts significantly with the writhing snake dropped from an eagle's talons, which appears to the Trojans 12.200–228—not a good sign, as Polydamas helpfully explains to Hector.

[27] Frontisi-Ducroux 2003: 90–91, for further references. She extends this idea of disappearance to the metamorphoses of the gods themselves; Buxton (2009: 36–37) takes issue with this aspect of her argument and suggests that evoking a disappearance is to add a step that is not present in the original Greek. See also Introduction to this volume, p. 13.

[28] Hom. *Il.* 24.602–617 (trans. here and below Hammond 1987).

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> (*en petrēisin*), in the lonely mountains, [615] in Sipylus, where, they say, the goddesses sleep, the nymphs that dance by the stream of Acheloïos: there, though she is stone (*lithos*), she still broods (*pessei*) on the pain the gods gave her.

As with the previous story of metamorphosis, we are made aware of the finality of death, the implacable will of the gods, and their power over mortal lives. But while her transformation is divinely inflicted, the emphasis of the story again draws our attention to mortal feeling. As told by Achilles,, the story of Niobe underlines how, eventually, she becomes tired of crying for her dead children: 'Niobe thought of food'.[29] The imagery of food is important to the context—Achilles is trying to encourage Priam to eat—but the imagery of consuming also occurs elsewhere, and powerfully, in this scene. For example, the term *pessei* is used to describe how Niobe is considering what has happened to her: the verb covers a semantic range from 'making mellow' or 'ripening' to 'chewing on' or 'digesting', or 'cooking' or 'baking',[30] developing into a metaphor that draws on different aspects of that imagery, from 'brooding over', to 'coddling' or 'nursing', to even evoking a sense of 'enjoyment'.[31] It is also, I think significantly here, used in the poem to describe how Achilles broods on his anger.[32] This vivid evocation of the powerful emotions that Niobe may be enduring, even as she has become 'stone', cannot be easily integrated into an image of her as unfeeling.

At one level, then, Niobe's internal activity contrasts with the rigid substance of her new form. This language draws the reader in to consider the subjective, embodied nature of Niobe's experience. Because of the imagery of eating and food firmly placed in our minds by means of Achilles' framing of the story, associated translations of '*pessei*' also come to mind. Niobe has been described as hungry: she is left to 'chew on' her cares; frozen in time, it seems the only aspect of her that 'ripens' is the suffering and her rage, and that she has received from the gods. Moreover, while we may assume that brooding is exacerbating a sense of hurt, we should bear in mind that the meaning of 'digest', with regard to rage, is used to mean 'cool down' in later texts.[33] This would be another powerful association here: that, as Niobe's body becomes stone (cold, hard), her lively emotions are also cooled. This does not mean they go away: we can bear in mind modern analyses of anger and rage that explore repressed, denied rage as a 'cold rage' that is held within and almost anaesthetizes the person feeling it.[34] The narrative

[29] Hom. *Il.* 24.602: *Niobē emnēsato sitou*. The scholiasts to this passage suggested that the additional information of her turning to stone (614–617) was a later interpolation by someone who knew the rest of/a different story.

[30] On its meaning as 'cooking' see Schein 2022: 115.

[31] See LSJ: 'make mellow, ripen' (Hom. *Od.* 7.119), 'digest', then, as a metaphor 'brood over', 'coddle' (Hom. *Il.* 4.513, 9.565); 'chew on', or 'nurse' (Hom. *Il.* 8.513), or even, 'enjoy' (Hom. *Il.* 2.237).

[32] Achilles' anger: Hom. *Il.* 4.513 and 9.565, and see Schein 2022: 115.

[33] Arist. *EN* 1126a24.

[34] Parker Hall 2009: esp. 95.

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effect of the description of Niobe's emotions informs what is otherwise a tableau: it provides the reader with a sense of an ongoing process, which to an extent informs our understanding of what has happened to her. But the moment of her turning to stone is not described here: she simply is stone.

A theme of punishment seems to emerge very clearly from this story. Moreover, the transgressions for which Niobe is punished are drawn into the narrative, even as they are left unspoken. Stone is without fertility: this change removes the gift of which Niobe boasted. Indeed, it removes her capacity to boast; she is silenced.[35] Briefly, we can consider how in other stories of petrifaction we see both similar and further qualities of stone reflected in the transgressions of those punished: perhaps a parallel to the loss of fertility for Niobe is the preclusion of lust for Pyrrhos, who is petrified after attacking the titan, Rhea.[36] Just as Niobe spoke out of turn, Kragaleus is turned to stone by Apollo when he chooses to award the city of Ambrakia to Herakles, rather than the competing gods Apollo or Artemis.[37] Later stories recall this narrative pattern: Ps-Plutarch's *De fluviis* (dating to the first century CE or first half of the second century) offers examples of individuals turned into mountains.[38] The stories, while often novel, are based on familiar narrative patterns of punishment for impiety: for example, Helikon and Kithairon, two brothers, are transformed by the gods because of Kithairon's dangerous and violent behaviour, killing his father and brother; Rhodope and Haimos are sister and brother, and lovers, who call each other Zeus and Hera—they are changed by the gods for impiety; and a shepherd, Lilaios, who worshipped only Selene, is ripped apart by lions—a fate arranged by the other gods—after which Selene changes him into a mountain, Lilaion.[39]

Fitting the punishment to the crime seems to be a focus of petrifaction—and may mean an emphasis on other aspects of stoniness. For example, blindness: sometimes it is enough simply to have seen something you should not, for example, a goddess at her bath.[40] Other instances combine blindness with silence: for example, the story of Battos, which is pieced together from across different sources. In the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, he is a nameless old man who sees Hermes stealing the cattle of Apollo—and Hermes demands that he remember:[41]

[35] Cic. *Tusc*. 3.27 (63).

[36] Nonn. *Dionys*.12.81, Paus 7.5.11 (but only mentions that there is a story, not what it is). Kelmis (Soph. F365 with Zenob. 4.80 [*Paroem*. 1.106]) was either a Dactyl (*Phoronis* F2 and Clem. Alex. Strom, i. p. 362) or one of the Telchines (Nonn. *Dionys* 14.39) who insulted Rhea and was turned (appropriately) into metal rather than stone; in Ov. *Met*. 4.81, Jupiter is the offended deity rather than Rhea.

[37] Ant. Lib. *Met*. 4, citing Nicander; Ambrakika of Athanadas *FrGH* 303 F1; Ov. *Met*. 13.713–715.

[38] Campbell 2024: 710.

[39] [Plut.] *De fluviis*: Helikon and Kithairon, 2.3; Rhodope and Haimos, 11.3; Lilaios, 25.4.

[40] For example, Kalydon sees Artemis, and Eurymanthos (son of Apollo) sees Aphrodite as she bathes after union with Adonis (Ptolemaios Hephaistion in Phot. *Bibl*. cod. 190, pp. 146–147); see Steiner 2001: 145. Callim. 5.83–84, describes Teiresias who is caught seeing Athena bathing—he loses his sight, and the ability to move or speak.

[41] *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 92–93 (trans. Evelyn-White).

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> not to have seen what you have seen, and not to have heard what you have heard, and to keep silent when nothing of your own is harmed.

We hear no more about the man in this work, and perhaps he is indeed a different man;[42] but in other versions of the story (both earlier and later) a man called Battos swears to keep Hermes' secret, and is then tricked by Hermes, who is in disguise, into giving up the information.[43] Like Niobe, Battos is punished for not holding his tongue—he is silenced. But he also saw what he should not have seen: he does not respect the order that Hermes gives him to 'make invisible what he had seen' and so he is made to not see, as stone.[44] Lykophron alludes to a similar story of speaking and seeing what is forbidden: an old Kyprian woman betrays the concealed goddess Aphrodite; she both sees the goddess and gives away her hiding place.[45]

When we return to Niobe, we see punishment is a theme that recurs over time and across media. Turning first to some artwork: images of Niobe's petrifaction dating to the late Classical period show the very process of the petrifaction, the move from action to stillness. Examples include an Apulian red-figure loutrophoros (Figure 1.1) on which Niobe is depicted standing within a funerary *naiskos*. She is solidified to just above the ankle; the static nature of her fate is emphasized by the arrival of her brother in a chariot—both are in process, and their different destinations are expertly contrasted by this juxtaposition.[46] Her inability to move is also highlighted on a Campanian hydria, 350–325 BCE: Niobe is pictured again within a *naiskos*, this time watched by the (rather smug-looking) gods, Apollo and Artemis, who killed her children.[47] Here, she is almost a *stele*—a tomb monument[48]—her feet have disappeared, and she is stone to her hips); she cannot run. Nevertheless, perhaps she does not give in: with her remaining upper-body she seems to make a gesture of refusal to her father Tantalos who is on his knees, perhaps entreating her. The rising tide of stone, the creeping *stele*-ization of this young woman, may itself be making a culturally specific association with death (as we will see), but it can perhaps also be seen as a comment on the existing

[42] Vergados 2023: 298.

[43] Ovid 2.687–707; Ant. Lib. *Met.* 23.

[44] As Steiner 2001: 145: 'blindness and petrifaction exist as two interchangeable or sequential elements'. Kahn (1978: 47) notes how the blindness of petrifaction accords with the instructions not to see found in the *Homeric Hymn*. In Ant. Lib. *Met.* 36, the logic of petrification is slightly distorted, as Pandareos who has stolen Zeus' dog is petrified although it is Tantalos who has lied about its whereabouts; Tantalos is buried under Mount Sipylos, however, which is a fate closely related to petrifaction.

[45] See Lyk. *Alex.* 826, with commentary Hornblower 2015 ad loc. (also p. 162 where she is metamorphosis no. 17); and see Forbes Irving 1990: 288.

[46] Apulian red-figure loutrophoros, *c.* 330 BCE, attributed to the Painter of Louvre MNB 1148, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Villa Collection, Malibu, California, 82.AE.16. *LIMC* VI.1, 'Niobe', no. 18; Schmidt 1992.

[47] Campanian red-figure hydria, *c.* 350–325 BCE, attributed to the Libation Painter, The Nicholson Collection NM71.01. *LIMC* VI.1, 'Niobe' no. 11; Schmidt 1992.

[48] The significance of the *stele* is discussed later in this case study.

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Figure 1.1 Apulian red-figure loutrophoros, *c.* 330 BCE, attributed to the Painter of Louvre MNB 1148, shows Niobe standing in a funerary naiskos; around her, attendants bring funerary gifts. She is slowly turning to stone from the lower part of her dress, upwards. Her brother Pelops accompanied by his wife Hippodameia, approach in a chariot. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Villa Collection, Malibu, California. 82.AE.16. CC0 1.0 UNIVERSAL www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/103V90.

rigidity of her character; the process of metamorphosis enacting her intransigence, drawing attention to her stubborn, persistent refusal to change.

That rigidity is also the focus of two, much later, epigrams from *The Greek Anthology*, which appear to be asking their viewers to reflect on the artistic portrayal of the occasion of Niobe's petrifaction. In these, her imposed and stony

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silence reappears, but with two different emphases. In the first, it is contrasted with the inability of women to still their tongues and halt their chatter; the horror of the event underlines how Niobe's incapacity to keep silent was the cause of her undoing:[49]

> On the Same.[50] 'Stand near, stranger, and weep when thou lookest on the infinite mourning of Niobe, the daughter of Tantalus, who held not her tongue under lock and key; whose brood of twelve children is laid low now on earth, these by the arrows of Phoebus, and those by the arrows of Artemis. Now, her form compounded of stone and flesh, she is become a rock, and high-built Sipylus groans. A guileful plague to mortals is the tongue whose unbridled madness gives birth often to calamity.'

In the second, the nature of her transformation into stone enacts the rigidity of her physical reaction of horror:[51]

> On the Same. 'Niobe, daughter of Tantalus, hearken to my word, the announcer of woe; receive the most mournful tale of thy sorrows. Loose the fillet of thy hair; thy male children, alas! thou didst bear but to fall by the woe-working arrows of Phoebus. Thy boys are no more. But what is this other thing? What do I see? Alack! alack! the flood of blood has overtaken the maidens. One clasps her mother's knees, one rests on her lap, one on the ground, and the head of one has fallen on her breast. Another is smitten with terror at the shaft flying straight to her, and one stoops before the arrows, while the rest still live and see the light. And the mother, who erst took pleasure in her tongue's chatter, now for horror stands like a rock built of flesh.'

Here again the poet reminds us of Niobe's 'chatter', but there is also great emphasis on the pain of her children. Indeed, there is a way in which this recalls the Homeric description of the snake eating the sparrowhawk's chicks in book 2 of the *Iliad*: the detailed picture of the destruction of the innocent babies, the mother helplessly looking on—and then the freezing of the scene. But, in contrast to the sparrow episode, these two epigrams focus on the horror of the events leading up to the metamorphosis rather than the petrifaction itself. While the children deserve pity, Niobe has only herself to blame.

But if we return to the Homeric account, alongside the idea of punishment there is also a very strong sense, and a compassionate one, of Niobe's emotional experience. And this aspect is also explored by later texts. In some accounts,

[49] *Greek Anthology* 16.132 (Theodoridas), trans. Paton 1916.
[50] The original label in this series (no. 129 discussed later in this chapter) reads 'On a Statue of Niobe'.
[51] *Greek Anthology* 16.134 (Meleager), trans. Paton 1916.

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it is Niobe's grief that seems to be instrumental in the petrifaction itself.[52] For example, Bacchylides describes how the change takes place as a result of Zeus' pity for Niobe's 'incurable griefs':[53]

> from high above the comely wife of (Paris), Oen(one),
> hastened along her final (path); not even grieving Niobe
> (suffered so much), she whom Leto's (august) children destroyed
> (together with) her ten sons and ten (lovely-haired) daughters by
> means of their long-pointed arrows; and when he saw her from
> heaven high-throned father Zeus pitied her, (worn away) by her
> incurable griefs, and turned her into a jagged stone and brought
> her respite from a (misfortune) hard to bear…

There is a sense here that the metamorphosis may be intended to bring some kind of peace to Niobe. But later sources are not so clear on this point: instead, Niobe's continuing distress remains a key feature of the metamorphosis. Thus, Apollodoros describes how the transformation occurs because she herself asks for it; but then, as a stone, she continues to weep.[54] Ovid describes something similar. Possibly influenced by artist's depictions of her creeping transformation, Ovid's account describes her stillness and her silence in chilling detail, in such a way that it evokes a sense of the progression of her experience:[55]

> Her hair stirs not in the breeze; her face is pale and bloodless, and her eyes are fixed and staring in her sad face. There is nothing alive in the picture. Her very tongue is silent, frozen to her mouth's roof, and her veins can move no longer; her neck cannot bend nor her arms move nor her feet go. Within also her vitals are stone (*saxum*). But still she weeps; and, caught up in a strong, whirling wind, she is rapt away to her own native land. There, set on a mountain's peak, she weeps; and even to this day tears trickle from the marble (*marmora*).

As is usually the case with Ovid's descriptions of metamorphosis—the transformation is conveyed in horrific sensory detail. And Ovid's statue weeps: the tears that continue to 'trickle from the marble' ensure that she is a monument to sorrow.

[52] And it is usually this aspect that is emphasized by modern scholars also. See for example, Nagy's (2018) emphasis on Niobe's weeping such that he describes it as an aspect of the Homeric scene: 'But Niobe, even after she is petrified, is like a human figure in that she continues to dissolve into tears. So overwhelming are her sorrows. Unlike the dissolving of a human in mourning, however, this petrified figure takes forever to dissolve because the tears that pour out of her sunken eyes flow out of an inexhaustible source of sorrows.'

[53] Trans. Campbell 1992. Bacch. 20d = *P.Oxy*. 2362 F1 col. ii + 1361 F36 (vv. 10–12) + 2081 (e) F2. cf. *Σ* AD Il. 24.602).

[54] Apollod. *Bibl*. 3.5.6 (Frazer 1921).

[55] Ov. *Met*. 6.301–312 (trans. Miller 1916); Frontisi-Ducroux 2003: 86. Buxton (2009: 6) notes the stress on the voice as what has changed or persisted in the metamorphosis process.

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This is a picture of emotion animated in apparently inanimate substance: nothing moves, flesh is fixed, limbs stilled, but those tears indicate an unending grief. More chilling perhaps than Homer's Niobe, chewing over events, Ovid's Niobe seems to have lost all consciousness—to be the instantiation of grief.[56]

And, while Pausanias denies those tears, yet his account still raises the question of the emotions of those stories and our/the audience's relationship with them. He makes it clear that he has seen Niobe, and, indeed, professes not to doubt her metamorphosis. But her role in the text is book-ended as it were, by evocations of the question of her reality. When she first appears in the text, he uses an image to ask and answer the question of whether or not this figure is a woman turned to stone: 'This Niobe I myself saw when I had gone up to Mount Sipylos. When you are near it is a beetling crag, with not the slightest resemblance to a woman, mourning or otherwise; but if you go further away you will think you see a woman in tears, with head bowed down.'[57] In his final mention of her, the question of her reality is discussed explicitly: he discusses the stories of Niobe and Lykaon, professing belief of the story of Lykaon and giving Niobe as a parallel, equally likely to be true—although he does not seem to accept the idea that the stone figure weeps during the summer months, finding this a step too far.[58] Meanwhile, across his text we find references to the deaths of her children, and examination of Homeric evidence to ascertain whether or not any of her children, in fact, survived.[59]

We can become tangled up in trying to identify Pausanias' attitude to myth, but if instead we focus on the stories that he tells, we see how even his questions about their truth reveal the local traditions that imbue the landscape with depth and meaning. In telling these particular stories, in expressing his doubts, he explores the ways in which the worlds of gods and mortals have grown apart. Just as with the petrification stories of the *Odyssey*, here we find reflections on metamorphosis offering a space for commentary on human relationships with each other, and with the gods.[60]

He is not the first to cast doubt on this story: Palaephatus, writing possibly in the late fourth century BCE, also focuses on the story-fication of events, and how

[56] Cf. Rosati 2024c ad Ov. *Met.* 6.301.312, who notes how Niobe's metamorphosis is the result of 'grief beyond measure'. He notes 'the pathos of maternal sorrow' as a theme in tragedy, calling attention particularly to Hecuba as described by Ovid (*Met.* 13.538–541); see also further in this case study, the imagery used by Herakles of himself after he has killed his own children.

[57] Paus. 1.21.3 (trans. Jones 1918). [58] Paus. 8.2.4–5. [59] Paus. 2.21.9–10.

[60] As Pirenne-Delforge (2008: 72) observes, stories about the gods are treated to a different kind of analysis by Pausanias from stories about the great deeds of the past; this is because the former refer us to a different kind of knowledge from the latter: 'La distinction ainsi opérée déplace dans le contexte des enquêtes locales menées par Pausanias celle qu'Hésiode attribuait aux Muses: un discours énigmatique sur le divin, d'une part, les hauts faits des humains d'autrefois, de l'autre. L'un est soustrait à la critique parce que sa vérité relève d'un autre ordre de savoir, l'autre est passible, à certaines conditions, d'une analyse contradictoire afin d'exhumer le noyau de vérité qu'il recèle.'

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they shape the imagination of those telling and hearing them.[61] In his treatise *On Unbelievable Tales*, he gives this account of the petrification of Niobe:[62]

> They say that Niobe, a living woman, turned into stone on the tomb of her children. Anyone who believes that a human being turned into a stone, or stone into a human being is a fool. The truth is as follows. When Niobe's children died, someone made a statue of Niobe out of stone and set it on the tomb. Passersby would say: 'A stone Niobe is standing on the tomb. We saw her ourselves.' Similarly, one might say nowadays, 'I was sitting by the bronze Herakles' or 'I was at the marble Herm.' That is how it was, but Niobe herself did not turn into stone.

As this suggests, his work offers rationalizing explanations of the 'unbelievable and wonderful tales' of myth.[63] His aim, as he describes it in his introduction, was not to side with those who wanted to discount these stories altogether, but rather to reveal the 'real events behind them'; thus, he traces for the reader the ways in which 'what people say' becomes something more extraordinary. His clarifications also suggest complexity: even as they apparently reduce the marvellous to the mundane, they simultaneously suggest the creativity of the human imagination, the intricate components of the cultural imaginary, and the ways that these come together to generate something remarkable and meaningful for those who participate in it.

But while both Pausanias and Palaephatus deny elements of this metamorphosis, the theme of grief nevertheless remains significant. It is the only detail that Palaephatus recalls—the loss of children is enough to justify a monument. And Pausanias uses this story of metamorphosis, and the grief it reveals, as a way of evoking other changes that have taken place, not only over space and time, but also within society, within his audience. His conclusions lead his reader to consider the significance of Niobe's and Lykaon's stories as markers of other losses—human relations with the divine, the growth of evils.

Thus, in trying to understand the significance of petrifaction, we can see how these different accounts shift perspectives, depicting this metamorphosis in terms that respond not only to authorial inspiration, but also to larger themes and questions. It may be important to these stories, at some level, that they explain features of the landscape, but they are also conveying a range of insights about those

[61] Palaephatus' dates, see Stern 1996: 2–3.

[62] Palaephatus 8 (trans. here and below, Stern 1996: 40).

[63] He was not alone and not the first to do this, as implied by Pl. *Phaedr*. 229c–d. where Socrates laments this 'sorry activity'. As Stern (1996: 8) notes, it is also important to distinguish this activity from the approach of Euhemerus, in which gods were understood to have been great rulers who came to be worshipped by their grateful people: Palaephatus' explanations do not take aim at the important gods.

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features. As an example, the story of Niobe's petrifaction—and the offences that caused it—ripple out across ancient imagery, and with a striking range of emphases. The provision of more detail introduces more questions rather than resolving our concerns. The malleable mortal body depicted in these stories moves from one substance to another, not only because it is punished, but also because it is pitied. The metamorphosis itself is an embodied commentary on different behaviours; it concretizes a range of risks, some against the gods and some against society. In the case of Niobe, the process of metamorphosis is one that links the sufferer to an embodied experience of grief and rage that lives forever; it contains the threatening behaviours and senses of the protagonist, even as it roots them firmly in the landscape (literal or figurative) of the viewer/reader.

Storied Statues

While we might understand some of these stories as offering explanations of landscape features, other accounts of petrifaction give *aitia* for elements of other types of '-scape'. There are, for example, a number of stories that provide, more or less explicitly, explanations for cults—what we might call the features of the worship-scape. Indeed, the similarities in the ways these stories present the arrival and ongoing presence of their petrified elements reinforces this parallel between the surrounding physical scenery and the metaphysical context of cult. Examples include the story of Iodama, priestess of Athena, of whom Pausanias reports:[64]

> The following tale, too, is told. Iodama, who served the goddess as priestess, entered the precinct by night, where there appeared to her Athena, upon whose tunic was worked the head of Medusa the Gorgon. When Iodama saw it, she was turned to stone. For this reason a woman puts fire every day on the altar of Iodama, and as she does this she thrice repeats in the Boiotian dialect that Iodama is living and asking for fire.

And Antoninus Liberalis reports the story of Kragaleus, son of Dryops, who made entirely the wrong decision—although how he could have made the right one is unimaginable:[65]

> This Kragaleus was already an old man at this time and was considered by his countrymen to be just and prudent. When he was pasturing his cattle, Apollo,

[64] Paus. 8.34.2 (trans. Jones and Ormerod 1935). It is understandable that Deacy (2008) thinks this is a response by the goddess to sacrilege, but Deacy does not mention her office.
[65] Ant. Lib. *Met.* 4.

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> Artemis, and Herakles approached him to make an arbitration concerning Ambrakia in Epirus…After Kragaleus had listened to these claims completely, he judged that the city should belong to Herakles. But Apollo was angered and he touched Kragaleus with his hand and turned him into a stone where he stood. And the Ambrakians sacrifice to Apollo the Saviour, but they consider their city as that of Herakles and his descendants, and they offer sacrifices to Kragaleus as a hero after the festival of Herakles up to the present day.

Both tales—although clearly offering room for their specific authors' creativity—appear to relate to local history. Antoninus Liberalis apparently sourced the tale of Kragaleus from the second-century Greek poet Nicander, but also possibly used a history of Ambrakia by the local historian Athanadas (who was most likely an Ambrakian himself and was probably writing in the late third century BCE); only one fragment remains.[66] In turn, the story of Iodama is one that neatly illustrates the implicit intentions of Pausanias' ostensible tour of Greece, revealing, through his reports of local stories, the ways in which Greek custom and belief persisted, here rooted not only in ritual practice, but also in material phenomena.

Once we have located them in space and time, then, do their stories offer us any further insights? Unlike the previous tales, it is difficult to see these stories of petrifaction as being focused on themes of crime and punishment. In each case, the situation that gives rise to the transformation can scarcely be understood as something the individuals chose to do. For the same reason, it is difficult to see these stories as commemorating a particularly worthy action, compared to, say, the story of Molpis, an Eleian who was sacrificed during a time of drought, and honoured with a temple to Zeus *Ombrios* ('Rainy') Zeus, in which there was a statue of him.[67]

Unlike those cases in which petrifaction is important simply because of the external sign that it provides, Forbes Irving suggests that the petrifaction process occurs as part of an apparent apotheosis: Iodama is one of the examples of 'translated women' who 'are the heroes of their stories, and their fate is of interest in itself'.[68] He lists alongside her the stories of Aspalis, Britomartis/Aphaia/Diktynna, and Alkmena, and suggests that 'In these cases at least petrifaction is a sign of some mysterious invisible process, and the stone figure is a compromise not only between natural material and human form, but between men and the other world.'[69]

But while we may agree with the focus on these women and their fates as important and intriguing, if we examine each of these stories in turn the parallels

[66] Jacoby argued that the scenario came from Nicander, with local details from Athanadas, writing to satisfy local interest in a city that had been conquered but preserved and elevated by Pyrrhos (who made the city his capital, *c.* 294 BCE) and then the Aitolians (*c.* 230–229); see *FGrH* 303 ad loc.; see also Rzepka 2016.

[67] Schol. Lyk. *Alex.*159–160. The Lyk. lines refer to the 'rock of Molpis', but Elis is not rocky. Some have tried to emend the Greek (from *petran* 'rocky' to *patran*, 'fatherland'); but could this phrase hint at a petrification?

[68] Forbes Irving 1990: 141.

[69] Forbes Irving 1990: 141. Aspalis: Ant. Lib. *Met.* 13; Britomartis/Aphaia/Diktynna: Ant. Lib. *Met.* 40, and Paus. 2.30.3 for her different names; Alkmena: Ant. Lib. *Met.* 33.

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begin to break down. Forbes Irving's analysis does seem to work for Diktynna: originally a young woman called Britomartis, she disappears after a fisherman tries to rape her in Aegina, where a statue of her appears in the temple of Artemis. On the site where she disappeared, a temple is built for her; as Pausanias reports, she is called Aphaia and worshipped as a god among the Aeginetans, receiving the name Diktynna of the Nets in Krete.[70] Her transformation is underlined by her change of name, and her association with Artemis. In contrast, Alkmena's story concerns the *replacement* of a corpse with a stone (by Hermes, on Zeus' instruction), which may then become the focus of some kind of cult. The relationship here is memorializing: Alkmena's body is replaced, but meanwhile she has been taken off to participate in a second marriage, either in Hades or in Elysium.[71] Aspalis' process of statuification seems closer in kind to that of Diktynna, She is pursued by a man (whose name, Tartaros, suggests the story pattern of the predatory monster) and her statue appears 'beside that of Artemis'.[72] But this young woman is certainly dead before any kind of apotheosis can be considered, as the annual ritual of hanging a goat, done in her name, underlines. This story seems to describe a process of divinely ordained memorializing rather than straightforward apotheosis. Finally, as we have seen, Iodama is described explicitly in the ritual as being alive, although she has been turned to stone, and in what way is that an apotheosis?

If this approach does not seem to work, then Forbes Irving also makes another suggestion that these stone images are 'doubles or substitutes that provide a point of contact with an unseen world.'[73] To support this he turns to Jean-Pierre Vernant's argument concerning the *kolossos*, or 'statue', which, he argues, in Archaic Greek culture was closely related to the 'soul' (*psuche*), the 'dream-image' (*oneiros*), the 'shade' (*skia*), and the 'supernatural apparition' (*phasma*). This link is apparent in the use of the term *eidolon* ('image'), which may be used to describe all of these phenomena, which, he argues, although they may seem to our minds 'so different from one another, are associated because, in the cultural context of Archaic Greece, the mind apprehends them as equivalent and they possess a similar significance'; this is the category of the 'double', which is, importantly, 'not of this world'.[74] The *kolossos* in particular, he asserts, has a 'close affinity with death and the dead', which is apparent in a stone's silence and lack of sight, as well as its hard, dry and rigid, immobile, substance.[75] In many ways this might appear to create a contrast with the *psuche* of man with its elusive mobility; but Vernant argues that the *kolossos* and the *psuche* are, 'as extremes, closer to each other in some respects than to the intermediate position represented by the living man.'[76] And this he

[70] Paus. 2.30.3.

[71] A Boiotian tradition of her marrying Rhadamanthys while living (Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.4.11; and see Plut. *Lys.* 28.9 for his tomb near her at Haliartus) may be the reason why she is translated to Elysium.

[72] On Tartaros the rapist, see Forbes Irving 1990: 286.

[73] Forbes Irving 1990: 141.

[74] Vernant 1983: 308.

[75] Vernant 1983: 311–312.

[76] Vernant 1983: 313. He explores this relationship (319, n. 34) in the description of Achilles' horses in the *Iliad* (Hom. *Il.* 17.434 and 19.405).

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relates specifically to the rites of the *kolossos* in its use to 'fix, immobilize, localize in one definite spot of the earth this elusive *psuche*';[77] that is, the use of the *kolossos* to contain or lay ghosts. Vernant provides, as an example, the binding of a statue of Aktaion to help control his ghost: this shows that 'the original purpose of the *kolossos*' was 'to attract and pin down a double that found itself in abnormal circumstances.'[78]

In response, to begin with, we might raise some questions about the implications of this argument: the urban landscape would have been populated by statues of individuals, both mortals and gods—are they all to be considered in this way? But more specifically, can the parallel work as a way of thinking about the stone versions of these four women described above? Importantly, the dynamics of each of these narratives are different: in Vernant's account the man-made statue is created to enable a relationship of similarity to suggest power over the unseen (a dynamic of sympathetic magic); in contrast, in our mythic stories, the human body is removed and replaced, apparently by unseen powers. In order for these to align we must imagine an interim step in which the ghost of, for example, Aspalis, is causing havoc in her community, which receives the advice to create a statue. But the stories here offer no such intervening explanation—no man-made images occur. Moreover, there are distinct differences among the narratives: the statue is described in different terms across our four cases, in one it is the sign of a transformation (Aphaia/Diktynna); in another a substitute for a stolen corpse (Alkmene); in another a memorial to a death (Aspalis); and, finally, it appears to be a marker of a still-living being (Iodama). Moreover, and perhaps finally, these are individuals whose metamorphoses seem not to be avoidable: they are forced into situations that are not of their making, with very little recourse. These differences suggest a more complex set of associations than the single if encompassing relationship suggested by Forbes Irving or Vernant.

Instead of looking for the meaning of these stories by eliding their differences and/or looking to external parallels for explanations, in the following sections I want to approach this question by concentrating on the details of the stories themselves, focusing in particular on the very substances of the metamorphosis. In what follows, I argue that not all earth materials are considered equal, and the type of material invoked in the metamorphosis played an important role in the way that audiences interpreted each tale.

The Emotions of Materiality

My argument that the earth material of a story of metamorphosis is a significant element of that story is helpfully demonstrated by tales that explore the opposite

[77] Vernant 1983: 313. [78] Vernant 1983: 314, citing Paus. 9.38.5.

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of metamorphosis, that is, the potential for animation of ancient Greek statues. In this context, stone appears to have been considered a peculiarly and significantly inert substance in Greek myth. Those statues that are able to move are occasionally made of wood, but are usually of metal, often bronze, and are forged by supernatural or supernaturally gifted metalworkers.[79] In ancient Greek myth, there is a distinct tradition of such talented smiths, from divinities such as Hephaistos, who creates the metal man (or bull) Talos, to mortals with greater-than-mortal powers, such as the mysterious, magical tribe of Telchines, and the Daktyloi, who raised Zeus, and, of course, the master craftsman of them all, Daidalos.[80]

The idea that a wooden statue might possess such qualities seems to have been considered much less likely—although it does happen; indeed, certain fragments of ancient comedy draw on this idea for comic affect.[81] In Kratinos' *Thracian Women*, the characters who are talking about a statue of Pan that has disappeared assume it must be wood or bronze:[82]

(B) Of bronze or wood? Or is there a golden one at hand?
(A) Not that wooden one, not at all…but the bronze one has done a runner.
(B) Was it made by Daedalus then, or did someone steal it?

When we turn to stone statues, the evidence may appear at first to be ambiguous. If we bear in mind how the Greeks would cleanse, wash, anoint, clothe, and feed some of their cult images, then we are prompted to ask to what extent it was understood that these statues were somehow alive. Some later sources note stories of cult statues that become animated during consecration.[83] Christian sources observe—for obvious reasons—the process by which an inanimate object becomes a focus of devotion.[84] But their need to call out this phenomenon only reinforces the lack of information about how the worshippers themselves recognized this process as taking place. Near-Eastern practices certainly indicate such a perception and, indeed, there were specific rituals—like the 'washing and opening of the mouth'—that seem to have been intended to prompt the vivification of a statue.[85]

[79] Hes. *Theog.* 581–544 describes a crown made by Hephaistos of gold, on which the tiny figures of creatures seem to come alive; Pind. *Pae.* 8.70–71 (Race 1997) describes golden birds on the pediment of the third temple at Delphi.

[80] Telchines: Diod. Sic. 5.55.1–4; Daktyloi: Diod. Sic. 17.7.5, Talos: Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.9.26. Cf. Detienne and Vernant 1978: 259–260 and Blakely 2006.

[81] Plato Comicus F204 (Storey 2011c).

[82] Kratinos *Thracian Women* 75 (Storey 2011a) and Aristotle refers to an argument made by Demokritos in the spirit of Philippos, the comic dramatist, in which Daidalos animates a wooden statue of Aphrodite by pouring quicksilver into it (Arist. *De an.* 406b15-22). Steiner (2001: 119) notes that the Athenian audience would have found this funny because of the double entendre of a female body being 'set in motion' by such an action; the humour is reinforced, I suggest, because of the perceived immobility of wood.

[83] Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 8.56 and Plut. *Coriolanus* 37.3.

[84] Minucius Felix *Octavius* 22.5, and cf. Tertullian *Apol.* 12, *De idolotria* 15, *De spect.* 13.

[85] Discussed by Steiner 2001: 114–116.

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In ancient Greek sources the presence of the god is more slippery: certainly worshippers might address a cult image, but, at the same time, gods were imagined as dwelling elsewhere and as receiving the smoke of sacrifice as it drifted skywards.[86] In the *Laws*, Plato suggests that there was a range of perceptions about this relationship when he observes: 'Some of the gods whom we honour we see clearly, but of others we set up statues as images, and we believe that when we worship these, lifeless though they be, the living gods beyond feel great goodwill towards us and gratitude.'[87]

But while these may have been treated as if they were living, they were not imagined as actually coming alive; quite the contrary. Sculpture was much more closely related, through literary imagery, to the immobility of death, both through the quality of stillness and the fixity of objects that were used to mark the burial place of the dead.[88] *Empedos* is a key term for underlining this association, in particular making a link with stone worked as a *stele*, a parallel that naturally brings to mind the monument that will mark the grave of the dead.[89] If we glance back to the accounts of Niobe, we find that Palaephatus remarks that Niobe on her children's tomb is like a grave marker.[90] In specific rituals, the immobility of statues was a key characteristic of their functionality. Thus, and just as Vernant has already reminded us with regard to Aktaion, in ghost-repelling rites a statue could be used to prevent the spirit from wandering from its resting place; indeed, in the *Meno*, Socrates claims Daidalos as his progenitor because his arguments are like images that refuse to stay in place and must be bound.[91]

The myth of Pygmalion, then, in which (in Ovid's version[92]) a statue created by the artist Pygmalion is brought to life by Aphrodite in answer to the enamoured artist's prayer, is an exception; notably for this case study, it is also exceptional in terms of the material—ivory—from which the statue is made. In contrast, other stories of those who fall in love with statuary emphasize rather the inability of the statue to be humanized and offer intimacy.[93] Reflection on this gap between

[86] See Steiner 2001: 115, n. 145. And compare the attitude or description of Athena at Hom. *Il.* 6.311.

[87] Plato *Laws* 931a (trans. Bury 1926). In the sixth century CE, Damascius (*Life of Isidore* 76e) uses the capacity to identify which statues did contain gods as one of the talents that distinguished the philosopher Heraiscus as having the innate thaumaturgical, as well as intellectual gifts of a 'Bacchic philosopher'; see Krulak 2017: 470.

[88] See Steiner 2001: 146–147.

[89] *Empedos* is used to describe the *stele* or image or stone that marks the grave (Hom. *Il.* 17.434). It provides (as Vernant 1983: 313) a structural parallel to the insubstantial soul that flies about. Its use indicated those about to die (Alkathoos, Hom. *Il.* 13.435–438) and could also be used for those who are stricken with grief for another's death (Achilles' horses, weeping for Patroklos, Hom. *Il.* 17.434–436); see Steiner 2001: 137.

[90] As Steiner (2001: 147) notes; she suggests that the Niobe in Aeschylus F154a (Sommerstein 2009) seated on her children's tomb is also meant to resemble a grave marker.

[91] See *Meno* 97d; cf. Steiner 2001: 139–140. This is one more indicator in this dialogue that Socrates may be regarded as possessing supernatural capacities; see discussion in Hobbs 2017: 103.

[92] For the story, see Ov. *Met.* 10.243–297; for other versions, Reed 2024a ad loc.

[93] E.g., the story of the youth who fell in love with the Aphrodite of Knidos: the lustful act of the youth leaves a stain on the stone, drawing the reader's attention to the immobility of the statue, the barrier of the stone (Plin. *HN* 36.22 and cf. 36.23); and see Steiner 2001: 192 and n. 30.

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animate and inanimate becomes both a useful way of contemplating the power of the artistry in a particular work, and offers a metaphor for expressing and exploring related emotions. For example, reflections on the imagery of Niobe that meditate on the contrast between animate and inanimate materials use this as a way to draw out opinions about her character:[94]

> On a Statue of Niobe. 'From a living being the gods made me a stone, but Praxiteles from a stone made me alive again.'
>
> On a Picture of the same. 'Thou seest the veritable shape of unhappy Niobe as if she were still bewailing the fate of her children. But if it is not given to her to have a soul, blame not the artist for this: he portrayed a woman of stone.'

These visions of statues brought into life are striking because the cultural expectation is that stone is inert; across Greek myth, stone receives no personification. In contrast, earth was a different 'matter': a fertile substance with the potential to engender life. This is seen most obviously in stories about autochthony, that is, about the origins of particular tribes that describe them being born from the earth in some way. For example, Pelasgos, son of Zeus, the first inhabitant of Arkadia, is described by the (likely) sixth-century BCE poet Asios (cited in Pausanias) as being 'similar to a god, he whom the black earth brought into the world in the mountains with the long-haired summit, so that there might be a race of mortals'; or Erechtheus, who, Homer tells us in the *Iliad*, was born from the 'grain-giving earth' (*zeidōros aroura*).[95]

The contrast between earth and stone in this sense is brought out by the story about the Athenians being born from stones thrown by Deukalion and Pyrrha, two humans who had survived a flood that had killed everyone else.[96] This tale occurs as early as Hesiod, and word play between *laos* 'people' and *laas* 'stone' offers the key association of ideas.[97] Either the stones emerge from the earth or (as some have argued) the recreation of the human race could be said to emerge from

[94] *Greek Anthology* 16.129 (Anonymous) and 16.130 (Julianus Prefect of Egypt), trans. Paton 1916.

[95] Paus. 8.1.4 (trans. Jones 1918) (= Asios F8 West 2003a). Erechtheus: Hom. *Il.* 2.546–549. In Greek myth, Erechtheus is often elided or confused with Erechthonios, and in Eur. *Ion* 20–21 and 267, Erechthonios is earth-born.

[96] Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.7.2; see Hes. FF3, 5, 6 and 251 (Most 2018b); Akousilaos of Argos *FGrH* 2 FF34–35; Pind. *Ol.* 9.41–46. Apollodoros makes the wordplay explicit; Pindar alludes to it; see also Strabo 7.7.2. The idea that humankind was generated from stone or a tree seems to have been a traditional idea found in a phrase that is repeated across Greek literary texts: in the *Odyssey* (19.163) the phrase '*ou gar apo druos essi palaiphatou oud' apo petrēs*' '(for you are not) come from some oak tree or stone' is used by Penelope to express her question to Odysseus, who is in disguise, about where he comes from; Hes. *Theog.* 35 uses the imagery to describe the origins of his poem, rather than its content; Pl. *Apol.* 34d, '*oud' egō apo druos oud' apo petrēs pephuka, all' ex anthrōpōn*' is also using it of origins, and it implies that the person thus described has an established (human) family. (But the phrase seems to be used in a very different sense at Hom. *Il.* 22.126.) Nonnos *Dionysiaca* 12.56–58 refers to a story of the human race being born from a tree but refers to a pine tree.

[97] Hes. F251 (Most 2018b); see in this case study, n. 9.

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the dynamic of stones actually making contact with earth.[98] This emphasizes the fertility of earth, resembling the dynamic of sexual collision that is repeated in other traditional stories, which, in turn, both draws on and informs the imagery, found elsewhere in literature, of woman as land and man as the farmer that ploughs her.[99] It is this same set of associations, perhaps, that underlies the use of earth—more specifically, mud—and water to create Pandora, who, in the version told in the *Works and Days*, is fashioned in 'the fair lovely form of a maiden':[100] she is then adorned and decorated like a cult figure and presented to the gods by Hephaistos.[101] This differentiation between stone and earth returns us to the significance of petrifaction specifically for women, insofar as it seems to be associated with the destruction of their fertility.

And there are further differentiations in the meaning of earth materials even beyond this initial contrast. For example, in Homeric epic there appears to be a particular difference in the perceived significance of terminology for rocks, stones, and *stelai*. In the *Iliad*, rock (most usually *chermadion*, but four times *petros*), is hurled as a weapon.[102] In the form *petra*, it is frequently used of cliffs by the sea. While the image of rock is occasionally used to describe a simple landmark,[103] we also find it in similes that take us suddenly to landscapes very different from the battlegrounds of Troy. For example, in the *Iliad* we find it in descriptions of the movements of gods who fly like, or as, birds—once, as a predator soaring high above a rock; then, as prey, seeking to avoid a falcon by hiding in a hollow cave.[104] When Patroklos drags Thestor son of Enops out of his chariot car, he is likened to a man sitting on a rock fishing.[105] When the Greeks gather,

[98] As Loraux (1986: 5) notes, some sources seem to indicate that men and gods come from the same source. But these same sources also underline the differences between the two: in Hes. *Op.* 108, the story that follows the poet's announcement that he will explain how man and gods spring from the same substance is the 'Ages of Man', in which men are explicitly *made by* the gods. Pind. *Nem.* 6.1 (in honour of Alkidimas of Aegina) states that both 'draw their breath from a single mother', but here he immediately draws attention to the power (*dunamis*) of the gods. He goes on (ll. 7–11) to draw a parallel between Alkimidas and the fruitful fields, a metaphor for the very human experience of sometimes winning, sometimes losing in the games.

[99] Earth's fertility: Hes. *Theog. passim*. Imagery of land/farmer: Soph. *Trach.* 31–34, where Deianeira describes Herakles visiting her as being like a farmer visiting a distant field; Soph. *OT* 1211, 1257, 1485, 1497; also found in Old Comedy, see, e.g. Ar. *Ach.* 989–1000, and see Henderson 1975: 45–47, 166–169. Cf. Gould 1980: 53 on Herodotos, who draws attention to how women are 'seen as linked with the sacred, as necessary to the continuity of society and disruptive of it, the victims and the cause of violence and bloodshed', and he also briefly notes the interchangeability both literally and metaphorically of women and land. Forbes Irving (1990: 64–65) understandably links this with women as wild animals, and with the taming of the wild.

[100] Quotation from Hes. *Op.* 63 (trans. West 1988).

[101] Hes. *Op.* 79–82 (details of further adornment in Hes. *Theog.* 571); see Loraux 1981: 79. As Faraone (1992: 102) has observed, the affinity to a cult statue may be deliberate—intended to beguile men into trusting that the image is for their benefit; see also Steiner 2001: 117.

[102] *Chermadion*: Hom. *Il.* 4.518, 5.302, 5.582, 8.321, 11.265, 11.541, 12.154, 13.323, 14.410, 15.250, 15.578 and 587, 16.774, 20.285. *Petros*: 7.270, 16.411 and 734, 20.288.

[103] It occasionally occurs as a simple landscape marker: Hom. *Il.* 2.617, 11.757 (both times the Olenian rock). In *Il.* 4.107–108, it is part of an *ekphrasis* describing the origins of Pandaros' bow.

[104] Hom. *Il.* 13.63–64 (predator), 21.493–495 (prey).

[105] Hom. *Il.* 16.407–408.

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hastening from their ships, it is like bees thronging, pouring out of their caves; and when the Greeks chase Hector, he is like a stag or a goat, pursued by dogs and country-folk, concealed by the sheer rock.[106]

Sometimes in these similes, rock is used to evoke the qualities of people, not just the landscapes around them: Hector leading his men is like a rock bursting forth from a cliff; while, in turn, the Greeks stand against him like a wall of rock by the sea.[107] These rocks, depicted in their different landscapes, offer imagery that is teeming with energy and dynamism. This is even the case when they are used to describe moments of great pathos: for example, when Agamemnon and Patroklos weep, they are described as being like fountains of dark water pouring down over cliffs; the simile, with its contrast of rock and flowing water, vividly evokes the strength of each warrior's grief.[108]

In contrast with these images of living landscapes, other terms emphasize the stillness of worked stone. For example, *stele*, as discussed, means a tomb monument, and sometimes it is used to describe an actual gravestone.[109] Elsewhere (albeit rarely) its imagery evokes a character's inability to move, which is clearly associated with death or dying: for example, the horses of Achilles weeping for Patroklos, unwilling to go back into battle.[110] The characters of the epics themselves appear to draw these distinctions of terminology. When Hector shouts to encourage his men he uses the materials-language of manufacturing, arguing that the Greeks are not made of stone or iron. For 'stone', he uses *lithos*—a term used in the *Iliad* to refer not only to stones employed as weapons, but also stone that has been polished or prepared.[111] Looking back to the description of the petrifaction of Niobe, we see that both she and the people around her are described with the term *lithos*, emphasizing their stillness, in a rocky landscape described with the term *petra*.[112]

Indeed, some of these nuances between natural and crafted materials may also relate to gender. In the *Iliad*, for example, we find Menelaos abusing his men for not having an appetite to fight by wishing that they be reduced to mud and water if they continue to be so apathetic:[113] 'Well, may you all rot into water and earth, each one of you who sits on here in stark ignominy, spiritless.' The abuse here may be much more than simply a suggestion that he finds these men weak and ineffectual. If we recall the story of the creation of the first woman, Pandora—who is

[106] And cf. Hom. *Il.* 2.87–89 (the Greeks); 15.271–274 (Hector).
[107] Hom. *Il.* 13.136–139 (Hector); 15.618–621 (the Greeks).
[108] Hom. *Il.* 9.14–16 (Agamemnon); 16.2–4 (Patroklos).
[109] *Stele* as actual tomb monument: Hom. *Il.* 11.371, 16.457, and 675; and it is developed in late Archaic and Classical poetry as a symbol of death (Steiner 2001: 136–138).
[110] Hom. *Il.* 17.434–435. Also used to describe Alkathoos, when Poseidon stops him so that Idomeneus can kill him, Hom. *Il.* 13.438.
[111] *Lithos* as a weapon: Hom. *Il.* 5.308, 7.264, 8.327, 12.287, 12.459, 16.740, 21.403. As prepared stone: Hom. *Il.* 6.244, 16.212, 18.504, 21.340.
[112] Hom. *Il.* 24.611 and 617.
[113] Hom. *Il.* 7.99–100.

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also made of earth and water, and who was very clearly a figure that was manufactured for a purpose—then Menelaos' abuse may also convey the implication that these men are nothing but women.[114]

Thus, we see that the nature of the substance that is used in these examples seems, perhaps unexpectedly, to convey associative information with the potential to shape a reader's emotional interpretation. Having looked at the ways that earth matters seem to have been used to evoke relationality—the emotions of materiality—I want to turn back now to stories of petrifaction, and explore the role that stone may play in those stories, arguing in turn for a materiality of emotions.

The Materiality of Emotions

One of the more straightforward ways (at least at first sight) of interpreting narratives of metamorphosis in general, and petrifaction in particular, is to understand them as stories of punishments meted out in response to the display, among mortals, of particular emotions.[115] For example, a number of stories of petrifaction report the metamorphosis event as the response by a goddess to inappropriate or uncontrolled lust on the part of a mortal towards them, for example, Pyrrhos, who is petrified after he lusts after the titaness, Rhea; or because a goddess is jealous of a mortal's love of another mortal, as befell the shepherd Daphnis.[116] Other petrifactions seem to be linked to crimes of pride: these include those characters who boast of their own beauty (Lethaea and Olenus); or of their children (Niobe); or the exceptional nature of their love (Rhodope and Haimos).[117]

Some of the petrified have simply not respected the wishes of the gods—Aglauros, for example, prevents Hermes from reaching her sister Herse, with whom he is in lust.[118] Herse and Aglauros are daughters of Kekrops, King of Athens. Hermes, messenger of the gods, becomes infatuated with Herse and bribes her sister Aglauros so that he can have access to Herse. This annoys the goddess of wisdom, Athena, who afflicts Aglauros with envy, so that she tries to prevent Hermes from entering Herse's room, whereupon Hermes changes her into a stone; this is coupled with this powerful force of envy that means the stone is dark, not white marble.[119] Others, for example, the Propoitides (and perhaps the daughters of

[114] Hes. *Op.* 63. [115] As above, Forbes Irving (1990: 143) takes this approach.
[116] The stories of Pyrrhos: Nonn. *Dionys.* 12.81; Kelmis: Soph. F365 (see Lloyd-Jones 1996: 194–195) and Ov. *Met.* 4.281–282; and Daphnis: Ov. *Met.* 4.276–278.
[117] Lethaea and Olenus: Ov. *Met.* 10.68–71; Rhodope and Haimos: Ov. *Met.* 6.87–88 (see also the case study Water, p. 36).
[118] Aglauros: Ovid 2.819–832 and Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.14.3. Battos: Ov. *Met.* 2.680–707; Ant. Lib. *Met.* 23; *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 186–189. And the Kyprian woman: Lyk. *Alex.* 826, discussed above, p. 37.
[119] See Barchiesi 2024c ad Ov. *Met.* 2.825–826: in the version told by Ovid, the process is described using terms that are, at this time, found in medical prose texts.

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Kinyras), who denied or otherwise disrespected Aphrodite could be said to be downright impious.[120]

It is not always straightforward to find the offence we assume must have been committed: for example, the case of Arsinoe is at first sight puzzling.[121] Her family rejects her lover who kills himself; she hard-heartedly peers out at the corpse of the man at his funeral—and is turned to stone—in this case, the term used is *lithos*.[122] She does not cause the death of the man in question (it is her parents that refuse the marriage) but she does connive at it, and causes the punishment of a nurse who had tried to help the hapless suitor. It is, in this case, a narrator who tells us how we should read this, accusing Arsinoe of *hubris*: Antoninus Liberalis describes her behaviour as *pros hubrin*. But not all commentators are persuaded, finding it difficult to draw a particular relationship between Arsinoe's behaviour and her petrifaction, as opposed to any other type of metamorphosis:[123] why turn her—or any of the others—to stone specifically? But, as we have seen, the choice of the material may be significant here: stone lacks fertility, and so, in and of itself, this transformation has meaning. Not only is Arsinoe condemned to stone; her resulting childlessness, her lack of fertility is perhaps also a punishment for her family.

As this suggests, the choice of earthly materials had emotional and relational significance. The process of petrifaction, the choice of stone, had implications for how we are to understand the emotional and relational status of the body that becomes it. In what follows, I explore how such ideas may have been used in the imagery of petrifaction in Greek tragedy.

Grief and Pollution

I start with examples of some of the ways in which this imagery of petrifaction seems to be used to illuminate emotions, focusing in particular on emotions related to the killing of children. The first is from Euripides' *Herakles*, in the aftermath of Herakles' killing of his own children, when the link between the death of, indeed the responsibility for, killing one's children and imagery of petrifaction seems to surface in the interchange between Theseus and Herakles.[124]

[120] The Propoitides: Kyprian women who were punished by Aphrodite for denying her (Ov. *Met.* 10.238–242); she causes them to become prostitutes first and Ovid describes their physiological response to shame as drawing them into becoming stone. This seems to overlap with the story of the daughters of Kinyras who provoke Aphrodite's anger, either because they become prostitutes (Plut. *Mor.* 777d) or because of the goddess's anger (Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.14.3). Ovid (*Met.* 6.238–242) reports their father crying over them once they have become the steps of a temple, perhaps the one they have desecrated, as Forbes Irving (1990: 298) suggests. See further Reed 2024a ad Ov. *Met.* 10.238–242.

[121] As reported by Ant. Lib. *Met.* 39; in Ovid *Met.* 14.698–761 she is Anaxarete; see Hardie 2024 ad loc.

[122] Ant. Lib. *Met.* 39.

[123] As also recognized by Frontisi-Ducroux 2003: 189.

[124] Eur. *Heracl.* 1394–1399 (trans. Kovacs 1998).

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Theseus: Get up, unhappy man: enough of weeping!
Herakles: I cannot: my joints are frozen fast.
Theseus: Yes, for even the mighty are brought low by misfortune.
Herakles: Ah! How I wish I might here and now become a rock (*petros*), insensible of calamity!
Theseus: No more! Give your hand to your friend who would serve you.

Here, explicitly expressed by Herakles, the wish to become petrified is about the urgent need not to feel the intense emotional pain that he is experiencing. This is intimately related to the act of killing his children, an act so inconceivable that it has transformed the perpetrator. We have seen the very same set of associations made in a number of the Niobe accounts—where the process of becoming stone is not understood as a punishment but is thought of as soothing.[125] As we have seen, the term Herakles uses for stone—*petros*—is one that, in Homeric epic, draws attention to a landscape that is dynamic; it is used to evoke the strength of warriors.[126] Alongside Herakles' own words, it suggests that Herakles does not seek a petrifaction that is death—but one that allows him to live, albeit free of the pain that he himself has created.

Such an idea is reinforced by the use of petrifaction imagery in a second example from Euripides' *Medea*, where, in contrast to Herakles, Medea is described by the Nurse as having lost her life and become a stone *before* she loses her children:[127]

Nurse: She lies fasting, giving her body up to pain, wasting away in tears all the time ever since she learned that she was wronged by her husband, neither lifting her face nor taking her eyes from the ground. She is as deaf to the advice of her friends as a stone (*petros*) or a wave of the sea: she is silent unless perchance to turn her snow-white neck and weep to herself for her dear father and her country and her ancestral house.

Again, in the Nurse's observation of Medea's transformation we find the term *petros*—one that evokes the possibility of still being in the world. But it also has, as we have seen, associations with male strength. While the Nurse uses it to underline Medea's silence and her isolation, the Chorus draws out something of these other meanings:[128]

Chorus: Hard-hearted wretch, you are, it seems, a stone (*petros*) or a piece of iron. You mean to kill the children you gave birth to with a fate your own hand deals out.

For the Chorus, the change in Medea underlines the new hardness of her heart. As we have seen, for a woman who is transformed in this way, the metaphor of

[125] See p. 40. [126] See pp. 50–51. [127] Eur. *Med.* 24–32 (trans. Kovacs 1994).
[128] Eur. *Med.* 1280–1281.

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stone has implications for her ongoing fertility; if her children are killed, she cannot have more. Here, too, children will die, but it is Medea's transformation that enables this. Whereas Herakles reaches for the imagery of petrification to soothe the pain of the loss of his children; the change observed in Medea is an evocation of the emotional state that will enable her to commit this murder. Comparison with the case of Niobe offers further insights. Niobe's petrifaction commemorated the pain of her loss; here, the imagery of metamorphosis anticipates the moment of losing, it underlines what is to come. As a woman of stone, she cannot see or hear; she is unmoving in the sense that she cannot be persuaded to change course.

The imagery of petrifaction used in these stories suggests that its symbolism goes beyond simply a notion of punishment. This kind of transformation is intended to convey insights about the emotional tenor of its story, and to offer some further understanding of the characters that the story depicts, and the emotional state that they have reached. It not only describes the emotional and physical state of the individual transformed, but also, importantly, their relationship to the people around them.[129] To return to the language of risk: these figures, who were themselves at risk, become objects of risk for their community. The process of petrifaction removes these individuals from society for both their own and their community's safety.

This analysis suggests that we can begin to make sense of these stories by drawing on the ancient Greek concept of *miasma*/pollution. As outlined in the Introduction, pollution may be a difficult phenomenon for modern minds—it has no easy parallel in our secular societies. In ancient Greek society, being polluted—whether the impersonal taint caused by certain social and biological processes, or the personal focus of an offended deity—would mean an individual was understood as marked, invisibly, metaphysically, and unable to participate in life within human society.[130] As well as being endangered themselves, a polluted person posed a danger to any community in which they lived or any individual to whom they were close: they were considered objects both at risk, and of risk in the ancient Greek imaginary.

We can see this vividly in the examples of Herakles and Medea, who are referred to in terms that evoke—in the ancient worldview—their polluted states; in each case, this is associated with the idea of petrifaction. Herakles offers us the most explicit example when he notes that his attempt to become a stone—to cover his head, to remain unseen by his friend—is because of his *miasma*. He says: 'For I am ashamed of the evil I have done, and, since for these I have incurred fresh blood-guiltiness, I do not want to harm the innocent'.[131] In the *Medea*, the

[129] Similarly, Steiner (2001: 145) has argued that allusions to statues by characters in tragedy signal 'An individual's momentary or more lasting departure from the society of the living, and of underscoring the rupture between the character and the community to which he formerly belonged'.

[130] On the overlap between *miasma* and *agos* see Parker 1983: 8–11—and further in the Introduction to this volume.

[131] Eur. *Heracl.* 1160–62.

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association is less direct but is still apparent: the Chorus describe how the crime that Medea was able to commit by becoming a stone is one that is ineluctably linked with a state of pollution: 'Grievous for mortals is the stain of kindred blood. For the murderers are dogged by woes harmonious with their deeds, sent by the gods upon their houses'; as Jason notes, Medea is a 'detestable creature, utterly hateful to the gods, to me, and to the whole human race'.[132] In line with this, Medea does indeed remove herself from society.

On the one hand, among these tales, there are plentiful examples of mortals whose behaviour can be interpreted as potentially generating personal pollution, since they describe ways in which the individual in question comes into conflict with the divine. These could include Battos (and the Kyprian woman) who tattled; Pandareos who stole from Zeus; Pyrrhos who lusted after a goddess; Aglauros who would not let a god pass to visit her sister; the daughters of Kinyras, foolish enough to deny the divinity of Aphrodite. Each of these stories may be interpreted in terms of the personal behaviours and characteristics of individuals within the tale; but, in terms of the institutionalized norms of human-divine relations, they have committed transgressions that would have been understood as causing offence to a god, and thus of prompting divine anger.

In terms of impersonally generated *miasma*/pollution, there are also examples among these tales of individuals either choosing to step outside—or being forced to transgress—certain behavioural boundaries. For example, we can interpret the story of Arsinoe as one of *hubris*, but it is her observation of a dead body that prompts (indeed, that becomes) her moment of petrifaction; while in Alkmena's case it is the very corpse itself that is replaced. Aspalis has been raped: within ancient Greek society she would be regarded as socially destroyed as well as metaphysically polluted.[133] Kragaleus is forced to invite the wrath of a god (his is an overdetermined offence). And pollution may help to explain Iodama's puzzling story, petrified despite or because of her office, which brings her too close to the goddess (and her image of Medusa).

Mention of Medusa reminds us of the stories around monstrousness that are included in this category. The petrification story of Atlas, already discussed, comments on the breaking of the custom of hospitality to strangers—and also introduces the narrative pattern of the hero returning from a horrifying ordeal.[134] The head of Medusa that Perseus now lugs about memorializes the terrors that the hero has confronted, an experience that he now literally carries with him. When he wields it against those who do not believe his ancestry, it communicates the trauma of his confrontation with the Gorgon—with concomitant effects.

[132] Chorus: Eur. *Med*. 1268–70; Jason: Eur. *Med*. 1323–1324.

[133] Britomartis' apotheosis as Aphaia/Diktynna also follows a similar story pattern (see p. 161). There is an important relationship here with shame, which is a concomitant aspect of *miasma* for Herakles in the passage of Eur. *Herakles*, see above; cf. Osborne 2011: 178–179.

[134] See in this case study, p. 29, and n. 5 for Atlas; for an imagining of the ongoing use of the head by Perseus to defeat his enemies, with Rosati 2024b ad Ov. *Met*. 5.1–249.

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It leads us to wonder whether a returning hero himself may have been considered a risk to his community, precisely because of what he had endured. Indeed, these are concerns that pervade the poetry of Pindar as he praises the victories of athletes, and seeks to smooth their return home. He invokes the image of Perseus and the stony impact of Medusa twice: once as he calls for Akragas to receive the victory garland of Midas and the victor himself and, again, when he describes the achievements of Hippokleas in the Boys Double Foot Race.[135]

With this understanding, a different perspective may be offered on the emphasis of these tales: rather than, or perhaps in addition to, seeing these figures as having been punished—as previous scholarly analyses have emphasized—their transformation can also be viewed as offering protection. That protection works in several ways across the different narratives: on the one hand, the threat that these individuals pose to society is constrained, placed under control; on the other, the threat to those individuals themselves is also limited. The interrelationship of the self, not only with society around us, but also with the divine, is literally and physically materialized and contained.

Building on the discussions in the Introduction to this volume, I suggest that this imagery of petrification sits within a larger discourse about the body's response to extreme stress, in which the body is experienced as becoming (like) another substance. In these stories, the image of a body transformed into earthly materials offers a way to describe an experience of extreme emotion, in which the body is 'rooted' to the spot; in modern colloquial terms it may be evoked by phrases such as being 'frozen' or 'stiff' with fear, for example. Before I explore that theme further, I will discuss another set of stories in which rootedness is also found: we move from stone to plants.

Into Plants

This theme of rootedness and containment of extreme emotion can also be seen in the stories of men and women becoming plants or trees, which, I suggest, are also a part of this category of Earth. The majority of women who become plants and trees, for example, are nymphs who have attracted the attention of a god and are fleeing from, or suffering the aftermath of, divine rape. Those on the run include, perhaps most famously, Daphne, Lotis, Pitys, and Syrinx—and we see shared themes and motifs among their stories.

Let us start with Syrinx, who, for different reasons, in different versions, roams the countryside; she is pursued by Pan. In Ovid's version, she is a nymph and hers is a story of transformation, achieved by her sister nymphs of the river Ladon

[135] Pind. *Pyth.* 12.6–17 and Pind. *Pyth.* 10.46–48, respectively. See, on this theme, Eidinow 2016: 105-6.

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(a hint of Daphne's story) in response to her pleas for help.[136] She becomes reeds—the music they make as the wind rattles them causes Pan such pleasure that he creates the syrinx or panpipes. In other versions, the details and the emotional tenor have changed: Longus makes Syrinx a shepherdess; when she escapes by disappearing, Pan cuts down the reeds, enraged.[137] In Achilles Tatius, the story is used to underline the threat that Leukippe faces through the test of her virginity: this involves entering a cave of Pan, where a syrinx (the Syrinx) lies.[138] Those gathered outside (this is a spectator sport) will either hear the syrinx play (if the woman is a virgin) or they will hear a scream. If the latter, then they must leave for three days, then return to see the cave opened by a priestess and the woman gone.[139]

In the earliest extant account of Daphne's story, told by Parthenius, we find another woman who roams the countryside—and is pursued by a god.[140] Daphne, a huntress, has an aspiring mortal lover, Leukippos, who crashes her band of female hunters dressed as a woman.[141] Apollo—himself in love with Daphne—arranges for Leukippos to be revealed. He is killed by the other maidens (and disappears); Apollo then pursues Daphne, and on the point of being caught, she asks Zeus for help—and he transforms her into a laurel tree. The Leukippos strand does not occur in Plutarch's telling of the story, but Pausanias refers to it, attributing it to the Arkadians and Eleans; he names the Arkadian river Ladon as Daphne's father.[142] This has suggested to some scholars that there may have been two separate narratives, one concerning a young woman, hunting, with a mortal lover, and another about a nymph almost raped by Apollo, who was transformed into a tree.[143] Indeed, a network of stories from cities across the Peloponnese offer different locations for Daphne's story;[144] while later sources (as we will see) located her in Syria, where Seleukos I had founded the grove and sanctuary of Daphne near the city of Antioch.[145] In later, more rationalizing accounts of the myth, Daphne is said to have been swallowed by the earth, with the tree appearing in memoriam.[146]

[136] Ov. *Met*. 1.689–712, with Barchiesi 2024b ad loc. [137] Longus 2.34.
[138] Achilles Tatius 8.6–13. [139] See discussion Ormand 2010.
[140] Parthen. (15); the manchette names Diodoros of Elaia and Phylarchos as sources, see Lightfoot 1999: 471.
[141] Leukippos is an example of a particular type of peculiarly male mythical death/transformation, which occurs during a scene of women, or a goddess, bathing; we have seen other examples of this already, see p. 36. In Parthenius' account, Leukippos' death at the hands of the band of hunting women is followed by his prompt disappearance (a narratological as much as a narrative conceit, leaving the story clear for Apollo to target Daphne).
[142] Paus. 8.20.2–4, the source may be Phylarchus; but Lightfoot (1999: 471) stresses the uncertainty of this possibility. See Paus. 10.7.8 on Daphne's paternity.
[143] Lightfoot 1999: 471–472; she notes that the involvement of Apollo in Pausanias' narrative concerning Leukippos is unnecessary.
[144] The story told by Plutarch (*Ag*. 9; see discussion Lightfoot 1999: 472) is set in southern Lakonia, where Daphne is the daughter of Amyklas (as in Parthenius 15) and acquires oracular powers (as a gift from Apollo), which she exercises at the oracle of Pasiphae, at Thalamai in southern Lakonia. A cult of Artemis Daphnaia is mentioned by Pausanias (3.24.8) at Sparta and at Elis by Strabo (8.3.12). Ovid (*Met*. 1.452–565) places her in Thessaly, a daughter of the river Peneus). Pausanias (10.7.8) is one of many sources that set the story in Arkadia, on the Ladon; see Lightfoot 1999: 473.
[145] Paus. 8.20.2, and Nonnos *passim*, see Lightfoot 1999: 473; in this volume, see p. 62.
[146] Palaephatus 49; Arrian *Bithyn* F 40 (Roos 1967); Hyg. *Fab*. 203 and Serv. ad Virg. *Ecl*. 3.63.

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The theme of erotic competition also appears in some versions of the story of the nymph Pitys. One version describes how she is pursued by Pan and simply swallowed by the earth.[147] But in another account, she is killed by Pan's rival Boreas, after he loses in a competition to win her affection, and Gaia changes her into a tree 'disposed to both lovers'.[148] Different kinds of divine rivalry shape the stories about the transformation of the nymph Lotis, who occurs fleetingly within Ovid's story of Dryops (see below), and elsewhere only in Servius. In the latter, she is fleeing the god Priapus when the gods take pity on her and change her into a plant of her own name.[149] In his *Fasti*, Ovid gives a different story, in which Lotis is woken by a donkey during the rape, leading to her escape and the ridicule of the god; the story explains a sacrifice of asses to Priapus.[150]

The rapid changes of Thetis also should be briefly mentioned here—although these are the transformations of a shape-shifting water-divinity, which we might view as a particular category of metamorphosis.[151] She is also changing shape in a bid to escape from a male, although in this case he is a mortal, Peleus. Some versions of the story report that this was the punishment of Zeus, because she had declined his advances as a favour to Hera.[152] Others describe how Zeus and Poseidon were competing for her, quarrelling about her, until Themis foretold that she would have a child greater than his father—and then they both withdrew and agreed to marry her to Peleus, described as 'the most pious man'.[153] Whatever the causes, in her bid to get away, Thetis changes shape. In the lost play *Troilos* by Sophocles, it may be Peleus who describes enduring her change from a lion, to a dragon, to fire, and to water.[154] Pindar lists fire, and a lion.[155] Apollodoros lists fire, water, and an animal.[156] Finally, Ovid reports a bird, a tree, and a tiger.[157] The multiple transformations are typical of a water-divinity, although it must be noted that the other examples are male—among them her own father Nereus, in battle with Herakles[158]—Thetis is an exceptional female deity. But, in the end, the will of Zeus prevails, and in human form she is married to Peleus. Not only is one of her changes a tree, but we might also see her mortal marriage as keeping her rooted and contained.

[147] Nonn. *Dionys.* 2.108 (a reference to her death before she marries); 42.258–260 (swallowed by the Earth while pursued by Pan).
[148] Libanius *Narr.* 4 and 32 (Gibson 2008).
[149] Serv. ad Virg. *Georg.* 2.84.
[150] Ov. *Fasti* 1.415; see Forbes Irving 1990: 267 for the development of the story across Ovid's oeuvre.
[151] See further, pp. 59, 116 and 139–40.
[152] Hes. *Catalogue of Women* F151 (Most 2018b).
[153] Pind. *Isthm.* 8.26–48 (the events that show his piety are described at Pind. *Nem.* 5.34–39).
[154] Soph. *The Lovers of Achilles* F150 (Lloyd-Jones 1996).
[155] Pind. *Nem.* 4.62.
[156] Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.13.5. Pausanias (5.18.5) in his description of the Kypselid Chest mentions only an image of her wielding a snake at Peleus.
[157] Ov. *Met.* 11.221–265; see Reed 2024b ad Ov. *Met.* 11.221 for other variations introduced by Ovid from previous versions). The tondo of a fifth-century red-figure kylix (Berlin F2279; *LIMC* VIII.1, 'Thetis' no. 13; Vollkommer 1997) represents these changes by including a small snake and a miniature lion beside the struggling figures of Peleus and Thetis.
[158] Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.5.11 Nereus is fighting Herakles, but his specific metamorphoses are not listed. Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.7.5: Acheloos becomes a bull, fighting Herakles. Hom. *Od.* 4.455–460: Proteus also changes shape to escape from Menelaos becoming a lion, a dragon, a leopard, a wild boar, running water, and a tree.

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So far, we have seen emotions associated with fear lead to these transformations. Other nymphs become plants in situations charged with very different emotions. There are, for example, some stories of mourning.[159] For example, the Heliades, or sisters of Phaethon, may have given their name to the play of that name, *Heliades* by Aeschylus, which, according to Pliny, told the tale of Phaethon's death and the sisters' transformation into trees on the banks of the Eridanos, trees that wept tears of amber.[160] In contrast, there is an awful humour in the vision of Menthe ('mint'), identified as a nymph of Kokytos by Oppian and a previous bride of Hades, squashed under Demeter's heel when she boasts of her own beauty in comparison to his new abductee, Persephone.[161] Oppian tells the story in full; Ovid provides a teasing glimpse and suggests that it was Persephone who caused the transformation.[162] Some of the versions attempt to place this in a particular location: Mount Mintha, near Elis, for example, is said by Photios and Strabo to have been named after this nymph.[163]

These tales of non-mortal women in turn provide frames for stories of mortal women, which at first sight may seem similar.[164] One example is the story of Leukothoe, a mortal daughter of Eurynome, whose father was the king of Persia. Eurynome is beautiful and so is her daughter—and this attracts the attention of Helios, who manages to enter her rooms (disguised as her mother), before forcing her to have sex with him.[165] What has happened to Leukothoe is noised abroad by one Klytie, once the Sun's lover, but spurned by him in favour of Leukothoe.

[159] The stories of Platanos and Elate (Niceph. *Prog.* Narration 6 [Beneker and Gibson 2016] and Lib. *Progymnasmata* 2.38 [Gibson 2008], respectively) appear to be later additions, building on the trope of the transformed mourner; cf. Forbes Irving 1990: 272–273.

[160] Pliny *HN* 37.31–32 (see Sommerstein 2009: 68–69) who also lists Philoxenus, Euripides, Nicander, and Satyrus as poets who told this story. The story is briefly mentioned in Eur. *Hipp.* 735–741. The scholia on *Odyssey* 17.208 provide a lengthy and detailed account that they say is found in the tragedies. See also Ov. *Met.* 2.319–400 with Barchiesi 2024c ad loc.; while Hyg. *Fab.* 154 and Lactantius Placidus *Narrationes fabularum Ovidianarum* 2.2–3 refer to Hesiod; see further Forbes Irving 1990: 269–271 and Diggle 1970: 4–9 on the myth and 27–32 on Aeschylus' *Heliades*.

[161] I have not included here the story of Philyra's transformation (after she is raped by Saturn in the form of a horse and gives birth to Cheiron—she then begs Jupiter to give her another form and he turns her into a tree, according to Hyg. *Fab.* 138) since this is probably a late addition to the story (Forbes Irving 1990: 271–272). Similarly, only Servius (ad Virg. *Ecl.* 8.29) tells the story of Caroea who becomes a tree while her jealous sisters become stones (in a story that resembles that of Aglauros and Herse).

[162] Oppian (*Halieutica* 3.486); Ov. *Met.* 10.728–731 with Reed 2024a ad loc. In later versions it is Persephone herself who prompts the transformation: schol. Nic. *Alex.* 375; Photios *s.v. Mintha*; Strabo 8.3.14. While Detienne (1977) has analysed this story in structuralist terms—Mint is to Cereals as concubine is to wife—in order to make this opposition work, Detienne selects only certain qualities of the mint that are relevant to his argument and ignores others; cf. Forbes Irving 1990: 268–269.

[163] Photios *s.v. Mintha*, Strabo 8.3.14.

[164] This is not to argue that 'mortal' is a straightforward category in myth: individuals often have complex ancestry and traditions, and may move from one ontological category to another. For example, Ino becomes a Nereid (Hom. *Od.* 5.333–335; Hyg. *Fab.* 2, Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.4.3), while Byblis is changed into a hamadryad after her suicide (Ant. Lib. *Met.* 30); both examples are discussed in the case study Water, p. 162 and p. 154, respectively.

[165] Ov. *Met.* 4.190–192 with Rosati 2024a ad loc.

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In particular, Klytie tells what she knows to Leukothoe's father, who responds by burying his daughter alive. The Sun (surprisingly) acts too late to rescue her; instead, he sprinkles her with nectar. Her body disappears to be replaced by a sweet fragrance, and in its place sprouts a frankincense plant. Leukothea's death, being buried alive, reminds us of the nymphs Lotis and Pitys who are swallowed by Earth. But Klytie's body is more like that of Niobe once she has been petrified. Transformed into a plant, Klytie remains stubbornly present, even while she wastes away by neither eating nor drinking; she is rooted to the soil, and she becomes, eventually a plant whose face follows the sun.

Dryope also appears to be mortal, although she has a supernatural heritage as daughter of Dryops, a son of the river Spercheios and Polydore, a daughter of Danaos. In the version given by Antoninus Liberalis, she is raped by Apollo, and, after the birth of her son Amphissos, she is stolen by the nymphs, and a poplar appears in her place.[166] A metamorphosis appears later in this version of the story: two girls reveal the place of Dryope's disappearance, and the nymphs change them into pines; this is why women are not allowed at the ensuing ritual. While Antoninus Liberalis draws attention to the aitiological aspects of the myth, in Ovid's account Dryope becomes a tree, as a punishment for picking the flowers of the lotus (the result of another transformation, see above). Transformation for a mortal is a penalty: Ovid's story focuses on the emotional suffering created by separating Amphissos (in this story, a baby) and his mother.[167] As Forbes Irving observes, the contrast between these accounts reveals how an author's decisions may set the woman that is the focus of the spatial story in a very different light.[168]

Stories of mortal women transformed into trees as a result of their grief seem to be later additions, which build on the Hellenistic trope of the transformed mourner.[169] But the story of Smyrna (and the birth of Adonis) includes a transformation into a tree in its earliest variant—attributed to the early fifth-century epic poet Panyassis.[170] This takes place because of incest prompted by Smyrna's neglect of Aphrodite, who then instils in her a passion for her father. She sleeps with him for twelve nights; then, on his discovery of her identity, he pursues her with a sword. She prays to be made *aphanes* ('unseeable'/'disappeared'), and the gods 'out of pity' turn her into a tree 'called myrrh [*smurna*]' from which her son Adonis is born ('Ten months' later, the tree burst').[171] While pity prompts the transformation, it is not clear that this is not intended to be understood, at least in part, as a penalty, especially in light of the violence of the birth of the child. There

[166] Ant. Lib. *Met.* 32, citing Nicander. The same mytheme appears in the tale of Kyrene, and of Bolina (see p. 160).

[167] Ov. *Met.* 9.24–393; as Forbes Irving 1990: 264.

[168] Forbes Irving 1990: 264.

[169] E.g., the stories of Phyllis' transformation into an almond tree (Serv. ad Virg. *Ecl.* 5.10).

[170] Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.14.4. I leave aside Smyrna as eponym of the famous city.

[171] Reed (1995: 329) describes this, bizarrely, 'as an unsavory sexual daydream told from the male point of view: an older man has relations with his nubile adolescent daughter without the remotest risk of being blamed for the misdeed.' I can see no evidence for this interpretation in Apollodoros.

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are numerous later versions of the myth, most of which retain the original story, but Antoninus rationalizes the myth by describing how Smyrna gives birth on the spot before she becomes a tree.[172] Others give reasons for the enmity of the goddess: Hyginus says that her mother boasted about Smyrna, saying she was more beautiful than Aphrodite.[173] Some versions name a different plant—a myrtle, a tamarisk—as the focus of transformation.[174]

Most interpretations of this myth have focused on the child Adonis. Aphrodite saves him, then fights for his love with Persephone. He is killed by a boar (Ovid says an anemone springs from his spilled blood).[175] This becomes the aitiology of the Adonia festival, often linked to the Mesopotamian tale of Tammuz.[176] In perhaps the most famous interpretation of the myth, by Marcel Detienne, Smyrna takes her place in the structuralist grid as both a perfume, that is an anti-agricultural product, and a plant of seduction who is equivalent to Adonis as human seducer.[177] But that is to ignore, as various commentators have observed, that the name of Adonis' mother is not stable across the sources.[178] Moreover, it is difficult to see equivalence between Smyrna's 'criminal' behaviour and what happens to Adonis, who does nothing to attract the love of the goddesses. If anything they both seem, rather, to be targets of divine victimization.[179] Indeed, part of the shock of these myths is the role reversal that they create: a sexually rapacious woman gives birth in turn to a sexually passive son; these are stories that defamiliarize familiar tropes, overturn clichés, and transform their protagonists.

Far fewer men give rise to plant life through their mythic deaths or disappearances. The story of Kyparissos (the cypress tree) is a tale of mourning, which became closely entwined with the story of the nymph Daphne and her transformation into a laurel tree after Seleukos I dedicated the grove and sanctuary of Daphne to Apollo.[180] This spot was famous for its cypress trees, and associated

[172] Ant. Lib. *Met.* 34. Other versions: [Plut.] *Mor.* 310f–311a; Cinna FF7–10 (Hollis 2007); Prop. 3.19.15; Hyg. *Fab.* 58; schol. Theoc. 1.107; schol. Lyk. *Alex.* 829; Lucian, *Salt.* 58; Opp. *Halieutica* 3.403–408; App. Virg. *Ciris* 237–240; Fulg. *Myth.* 3.8; Serv. ad Virg. *Ecl.* 10.18 and ad Virg. *Aen.* 5.72.

[173] Hyg. *Fab.* 58; schol. Theoc. 1.107 more specifically says that she bragged about her hair.

[174] Serv. ad Virg. *Aen.* 5.72: she is transformed into a myrtle; Hesych. *s.v. murike* says that she becomes a tamarisk.

[175] See fn 168; also Alciphron, *Letters of the Courtesans* 4.14.1; Ov. *Met.* 10.708–739 for the anemone; killed by a boar Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.14.4; boar is Ares in Nonn. *Dion.* 41.194.

[176] See detailed discussion in Reitzammer 2016: 27–29.

[177] Detienne 1977.

[178] Hes. F107 (Most 2018b) calls her Alphesiboia, Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.14.3 Metharme, see Reed 1995: 321. Forbes Irving (1990: 276) finds difficulties with Detienne's comparison of the stories of Smyrna and Adonis, but suggests that at least the connection of spices with Aphrodite and love is important, and the eastern, exotic connections it provides are appropriate to a hero who is (276) 'always seen as a foreigner.'

[179] Forbes Irving (1990: 276) observes the passivity of Adonis (when compared to Smyrna); Daube (1991: 1103) argues that the story implies that Aphrodite, by saving Adonis, then adopts him or owns him; see Reed 1995: 331.

[180] Libanius *Or.* 11.94–99 gives the foundation story (Seleukos finds an arrowhead, one of many arrows fired by Apollo, grieving Daphne's death); see this volume, p. 58. Philostratus *VA* 1.16.1 notes the parallel stories and describes the 'Cypresses of enormous height' (Conybeare 1912).

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stories give a variety of accounts of their origins. Ovid, for example, reports how a boy, living on Keos and loved by Apollo, accidentally killed his pet deer. His request that he be able to mourn the deer forever leads to his transformation.[181] Cypress trees were associated with rituals of mourning: during Roman burial preparation, until cleansing rites were completed, a cypress branch was planted outside the house doorway so as to warn away those who wanted or who needed to remain pure.[182]

Across the variants, a few details differ—names given to the boy's father and the boy's lover[183]—but the basic thrust of the story remains the same. Philagrius and Servius, in commentaries on the *Georgics*, describe how Silvanus loved Kyparissos; when he killed Kyparissos' deer by mistake, and the young man died of grief, Silvanus changed him into the tree with his name.[184] In his commentary, Probus says that Kyparissos killed his own deer, then starved himself to death from remorse; his lover Apollo was unable to bring him back to life and so changed him into a weeping tree.[185] Servius adds further and different particulars in his commentary on the *Aeneid*: one story is that Kyparissos killed his own deer, died of grief, and was turned into a cypress by the gods out of pity.[186] But in another, the theme of pursuit, which, we saw above, is common to stories of female nymphs, shapes this story: Kyparissos was a very beautiful and chaste Kretan boy, loved and pursued by Apollo or Zephyros, who fled to the river Orontes and Mount Kasios where he was changed into a tree.[187] The association between the tree and death occurs, Servius states, because the tree once cut down does not grow again.[188]

Other intersecting story patterns (the overweening mortal, the punishment of the nymphs) are also apparent in the story of the group of shepherds transformed into trees because of their mockery of the dancing nymphs and claims that they could outdo them. The story is found in Antoninus Liberalis (citing Nicander) and a similar story (but with only one shepherd, who is turned into a wild olive) in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.[189] Even shepherds—of all mortals closest to the rural landscape, and certainly close enough to mock the nymphs that inhabit it—are punished by being locked within it. While this story is rare and only briefly told, there may be some indication, however, that it developed from a much older tradition, and perhaps one that had a different structure, in which the tree is a

[181] Ov. *Met.* 10.106–142 with Reed 2024a ad loc.

[182] Serv. ad Virg. *Aen.* 3.64; 6.216; cf. Hor. Ep. 5.18; Lactantius Placidus ad Stat. *Theb.* 4.460–461; Pliny *HN* 16.40, 139. It may be the link with death, Forbes Irving (1990: 260–261) argues, that prompted Ovid to make this connection, and, he argues, this becomes the basis for later stories.

[183] Father's name, Amykleus: Lactantius Placidus *Narrationes fabularum ovidianarum* 10.3/4. Father's name Telephus, lover, Apollo or Silvanus: Serv. ad Virg. *Aen.* 3.680. See also Serv. ad Virg. *Georg.* 1.20; Probus ad Virg. *Georg.* 2.84; and *Myth. Vat.* 2.177 and 1.6; see Forbes Irving 1990: 260.

[184] Servius ad Virg. *Georg.* 1.20.

[185] Probus ad Virg. *Georg.* 2.84.

[186] Servius ad Virg. *Aen.* 3.64.

[187] Servius ad Virg. *Aen.* 3.680.

[188] Servius ad Virg. *Aen.* 3.680.

[189] Ant. Lib. *Met.* 31; Ov. *Met.* 14.512–526.

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memorial, and to a female not a male figure. Probus, a Roman grammarian of the first/second century CE, for example, also records a story told by Asklepiades of Tragilos (fourth century BCE), in which Boreas planted the tree in honour of his daughter Kyparissia; and the tenth century Byzantine collection, the *Geoponika*, tells of the daughters of Eteokles falling down a well while they were dancing in honour of the Graces and the earth producing cypress trees in their memory.[190] Both versions seem to touch on emotional themes of grief, which we have seen already shaping these story patterns.

The events that befall the male lovers of the gods—Adonis, and also Hyakinthos (beloved by Apollo and Zephyros) and Krokos (loved and accidentally killed by Hermes)—appear in sharp contrast to those told already.[191] Their bodies are not changed; instead, their blood is transformed into flowering plants. Similarly, the self-adoring (or sister-adoring, according to Pausanias) Narcissus is quite disappeared by the end of his story: the plant marks the ground where his blood stained the earth.[192] The spilling of blood on the ground was a part of a sacrifice type, *sphagia*, that may have been particularly related to Hero cult—and this may be part of its symbolism here.[193] In these stories, as we will see across the rest of the volume, it frequently marks a moment of crisis; often one in which a homicide has taken place, whether intentionally or not.[194] But, surprisingly, the result is a beautiful flower, suggesting, perhaps, that blood can also be seen as a generative fluid, rather than a mark of killing, and thus, in ancient Greek culture, of *miasma*/pollution.[195] Buxton has suggested that it is the 'social context' that

[190] Probus ad Virg. *Georg.* 2.84 (Asklepiades *FGrH* 12 F19); *Geop.* 11.4, this may have some relation to a story that Pausanias of Antioch (*FGrH* 854 F4) relates in which a young Egyptian man falls down a well, and the Cypress tree is renamed in his memory by his relatives (Asirvatham 2012).

[191] Adonis, see above, p. 62. Hyakinthos (killed accidentally by Apollo): Eur. *Hel.* 1469–1473; Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.3.3 and 3.10.3; (jealous Zephyros causes his death) Palaephatus 46 (Stern 1996: 78–79); Paus. 3.19.4–5; Lucian. *Dial.* D. 16 (14); Nonn. *Dionys.* 10.253–255; and Tzetz. *Chil.* 1.241–266. Krokos: Gal. *De comp. medic. sec. loc.* xiii. 269 K; Dioscor. *De mat. med.* 1.26 (the variant reports that the bloom flowered from the blood of Herakles). In some versions, Krokos is linked to Smilax who becomes a bindweed; see Piccaluga 1966: 240–241, n. 37 and Buxton 2009: 219.

[192] Paus. 9.31.7–9. Konon (*FGrH* 26 F1 24) recounts how his self-love was a punishment for his rejection of a lover who then killed himself; Narcissus then kills himself in turn, and the flower appeared from his blood. Pausanias observes that the flower existed before Narcissus' death, since Persephone is described as gathering the flower before Hades took her, by a poet who was born before Narcissus. Anethus and Papaver are listed alongside Narcissus by Serv. ad Virg. *Ecl.* 2.47, but without any further details of their stories.

[193] On so-called 'chthonian' sacrifices often associated with hero cult (and the debate about this categorization) see Scullion 1994 and Parker 2011: 80–84 and 283–286. For new epigraphic evidence for Narcissus' hero-cult at Eretria, see Knoepfler 2010: 101–26.

[194] This observation is also made by Buxton, who notes and then moves away from the alimentary interpretations of Ribichini 1983 and Piccaluga 1966, who argue that these plants were all important for the diet of the ancient Greeks. Something of this association may lie behind Pausanias' description of the pomegranate tree on Menoikeus' grave at Thebes: the inside of the fruit is like blood (Paus. 9.25.1). On Menoikeus, see p. 87.

[195] Buxton (2009: 227) argues that it is related to sperm and cites Parmenides (Cael. Aurel. *Chron. pass.* 4.9 [= DK 28 B 18]; Diogenes of Apollonia (Clem. Al. *Paed.* 1.6.48 [= DK 64 A 24]; and notes that it was a view attributed to Pythagoras (Aetius *Plac.* 5.3.2; Diels 1879: 417, 6).

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'*temporarily* turns blood into a pollutant'.[196] I would suggest instead that both phenomena (pollution in the mortal world, a flower in the mythic tradition) are equally significant for the meaning of these stories. It requires, perhaps, that we hold both symbols in our minds, and it is from their very contrast that the power of the myth emerges.

The introduction of the theme of *miasma*/pollution leads me to draw some larger conclusions about these stories concerning plant transformations—and the idea that they are also, like stories of petrification, narratives about individuals who are objects of, or at, risk. I suggest that, like petrifaction, stories of transformation into trees or plants, are stories about containing those risks. The prompt may be the presence of pollution, but these stories are not only about penalties; for some of the figures transformed, it is clearly a salvation. We can note the ways in which this imagery seems also to be structured by cultural perceptions of, on the one hand, gendered behaviour, and, on the other, the limits of behaviours. Among the plant metamorphoses, we see extreme experiences of the threat of assault engender changes for Daphne, Lotis, Pitys, and Syrinx; while, for others (the Heliades) it is the experience of loss and their grief. These women are nymphs, and we might think that their association with the landscape is that much more fluid than their mortal counterparts. This may also be apparent in the way that they are able, themselves, to transform mortal women into plants, or indeed to steal women away and replace them (Dryope). But similar experiences also lead to mortal transformations: the mortal woman Leukothoe becomes a plant, although she is first buried alive by her father; and Kyparissos is overwhelmed by grief to become a tree.

Alongside these tales are story patterns in which a mortal upsets a god through pride (Menthe) or inattention (Smyrna). If we bring to bear the framework of *miasma*/pollution, we can see how these experiences fit alongside one another. Indeed, the stories of Leukothea, whose father buries her, and Smyrna, who seeks to be made unseen, illustrate the ways in which metaphysical pollution is sometimes accompanied by social shame. But others of these stories reveal the ways in which these stories are associated with biological changes—death, birth, sex—and what occurs when those experiences are extreme, unwanted, and shocking. Similarly, the stories of the deaths of the male lovers of the gods, Hyakinthos, Krokos, and Adonis, offer further examples of the transformative potential of pollution in the mythic world. Homicide and, specifically, the blood that results, sources of pollution in the mortal world, result in flowers in this world of myth. But, in these instances, in contrast to the female protagonists, it is not male bodies that change, but those bodies' spilled blood. We will return to this gendered difference in the next three case studies, but here we can mark how the perceived roles of male and female bodies differ, both as targets of transformation and as elements of the landscape.

[196] As Buxton (2009: 227): 'Pollution resides in the context, not in the intrinsic qualities of the blood.'

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Conclusion: 'Fright'

In these stories of Earth, of male and female bodies made into stones, statues, plants, and trees, the interrelationship of the self—not only with society, but also with the environment—is literally and physically materialized. A common interpretation of these stories is that they offer aitiologies for features of the landscape; but the stories themselves do not always neatly align with this explanation. While in some cases their protagonists remain stubbornly in place, in other cases they disappear altogether, and their new location is unknown. When, as a presence or absence, they come to form a part of the physical and storied landscape, the semantics of their new state is richly polyvalent. They have achieved a new temporality, both timeless and eternal, and specific to a particular context, both that of their transformation (the story time) and that of its particular telling.

Similarly, we find variety in the apparent lessons of these tales. These are often stories about individuals not complying with the gods—whether that is a matter of choosing one god over others; denying gods what they want; lusting after a god or running from their lust; telling tales on the divine; seeing something you should not see, perhaps in a state of mind that is unacceptable; doing something you should not do; saying something you should not say. They may seem, at first sight, simply to be stories of divine punishment; but, as we have seen, it is far from obvious that these metamorphoses are always intended as a penalty or, indeed, that a transgression has been deliberately committed. In these stories, we find paradoxes: metamorphosis may be imposed out of pity or activated as a method of salvation. In those tales where an individual seeks escape, they are rooted in Earth, becoming a part of the surrounding landscape. Similarly the descriptions of these changed men and women indicate that, even while apparently inanimate, they continue to express or experience a sense of self.

The narratives that describe such events are, at a glance, intriguingly diverse. We certainly need to bear in mind how versions shift and change over time according to a range of factors, including cultural views of ideal behaviours, and/or authorial creativity and intent. For example, Niobe's suffering, as told in the *Iliad*, reminds us of the brutal continuity of life, while in later sources her figure is used to emphasize the virtue of silence in women. But Niobe's story is also a useful lens through which to recognize the commonalities of these tales, the story patterns that repeatedly emerge. As I have shown, these patterns explore the ways in which individuals can become objects of and at risk, both for themselves and for their communities. They evoke the concept of *miasma*/pollution, in stories that tell of its generation and its containment.

And, above all, they repeatedly draw our attention to the role of strong emotions—pride, fear, love, grief, rage—and their effects on the body and mind. Sometimes in these stories, emotions prompt a particular action, often a transgression, which

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then leads to a metamorphosis; but even in these stories, it is hard to separate the experience of the emotion from the resulting action, or, in turn, from the corporeal transformation that follows. Across these story patterns, in which male and female bodies are transformed to become rooted in landscape, we see evocations of a particular bodily experience of extreme emotion, one that shocks a body into change.

Seen from within some discourses of ancient Greek culture (and other cultures, in which the body was perceived as imbricated with the natural world), these tales may perhaps have been understood as describing the body as actually becoming another substance.[197] As I have argued, we should pay attention to the cultural meaning of different materials: different earthly materials may have held different associations for the emotional and relational status of the body involved. Considerations of gender are important for how we interpret those associations: the stone of warriors and 'hard men' is different from the worked and polished stone of statues, often used of women. It is not a coincidence, for example, that Medea is described in terms of *petros* before she kills her children.

But as I have argued, I think these narrative patterns would also have had, and indeed continue to have, a more intuitive resonance for their audiences. I am referring to their evocations of embodied experiences of extreme emotions. As I argued in the Introduction to this volume, it is possible to see parallels between the effects of the metamorphoses described in these stories—the inability to move, to speak, even to see—and current accounts of the body being in a state of 'Fright' as a possible response to extremely dangerous events. Fright occurs when there seems to be no opportunity to escape from an impending danger, and an organism instead 'plays dead', becoming rigidly immobile and mute, numb, and helpless.[198] Such a response is an attempt to survive in the face of overwhelming danger: the body deactivates any potential for a response that may give itself away, and begins to dissociate, experiencing themselves as 'detached' or 'removed' from their surroundings ('derealization'), feeling numb, and perhaps losing sensory capacities.[199]

These stories, which seem to describe impossible events, may in fact make an intrinsic sense to their audience, because they evoke such embodied experiences. And we can perhaps draw on these parallels to elicit different interpretations of these stories. For example, among the responses to traumatic events is sometimes the sense that the causative event is still happening.[200] This also seems to be

[197] Danièle Aubriot (2015: ch. 3) has argued for stories of vegetal metamorphosis as revealing a deep affinity, even continuity, between the human body and plants. I agree, but suggest that sometimes, we may want to go further, to suggest that stories of metamorphosis reflect an implicit understanding of the body in profound interactions with, even comprising, the elements that make up not only plants but other elements.

[198] See Schauer and Elbert 2010: esp. 115; Schwartz 2021: 36.

[199] Schauer and Elbert 2010: esp. 113.

[200] Schauer and Elbert 2010: 118–119.

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reflected in the narrative patterns of these stories, where a transformed individual becomes rooted and preserved in the landscape of their experience; indeed, we can argue, that the telling and retelling of these mythic narratives itself re-enacts the experience it reports. In turn, these may also be stories in which we find some comfort. If the body's responses to trauma are understood as mechanisms for survival—something of that may also be apparent in many of these stories of metamorphosis, in which individuals are depicted as enduring, even as they are forced to change.

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2
Air

Introduction: Removed

The previous case study, Earth, explored how, in ancient Greek and Roman myths, men and women are transformed in ways that 'root' them, either into earth materials or as plants. In these metamorphoses, the relationship between a body and the element it becomes is direct and linear. In the next three case studies, these relationships are both direct and indirect; the element is sometimes the substance of the transformation, sometimes it is a key part of the process of change. In this case study, I consider the ways in which air—be it manifest as space or as substance—participates in the transformations of men and women in a number of different narrative patterns of Greek myth, all with an underlying dynamic of being 'removed'.

Across the different mythemes discussed in this case study, air is not seen simply as an absence, but, drawing on the reflections of ancient authors, rather as a landscape. Moreover, in the ancient Greek mind, this landscape is not a single realm:[1] its complexity of form starts to emerge in early Greek poetry, where the realm above the earth already comprises two zones. Homer and Hesiod distinguish between *aer* and *aither*, with *aer* being something more like a mist or haze, and *aither* as heaven or ether;[2] the ancient commentator described *aer* as lower and heavier than *aither*, but others have disputed this.[3] Later Greek writers retained something of this division, tending to use *aither* for the realm of the gods, or even for Zeus himself;[4] while in the medical treatise, *Airs Waters and Places*, *aer* seems to refer to mist, fog, or a damp atmosphere.[5]

[1] Lloyd (2007: 135–136) describes a 'bewildering array of views about the nature of wind and air outside the body, on the role of breath or air within it, on the relations between the two, and many other questions'; he also notes how an additional level of difficulty is added because (136) 'Different authors appropriate the same expressions for quite different functions in their own articular theories.'

[2] E.g., Hom. *Il.* 14.286–288; Hes. *Theog.* 697–98, 929j; Hes. *Op.* 548–59.

[3] Wright (1995: 111–112) accepts the division, but see LSJ *s.v. aer* and *aither* where Aristarchos' distinction is noted and refuted.

[4] Herodotos uses *aither* for a cloudless day and clear night (2.25, 2.68, 3.86); divinity does not feature in his description—but we would not expect it to do so. *Aither* as realm of the gods: e.g., Euripides FF839 and 919 (Collard and Cropp 2009). For identification of *aither* as Zeus: e.g., Aesch. F70 (Sommerstein 2009) in which Zeus is the *aither* (and earth and heaven and everything); and Eur. F877 (Collard and Cropp 2009).

[5] As Kingsley (1995: 26) points out, citing Hippoc. *Aer* 6.2 and 5, 8.5 (twice), 15.4 and 5, 19.4, and 5.

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As substances, *aer* and *aither* were also involved in the making of the world and the mortals within it. Just how this was thought to occur and what the role and nature of air was in these processes, varied. Among the Presocratic philosophers, Anaximenes made it central to his cosmology—everything emerged from *aer*. In contrast, it does not seem to have featured at all for Herakleitos: while, put simply, fire was the crucial element of his theory of world-making (becoming earth and then sea before returning to fire),[6] nevertheless, *aither* was still associated with the gods in his phrase *aithrion Zeus* 'clear, bright and airy Zeus'.[7] Empedokles, whose theory of the four elements seems more systematic and certainly proved very influential, positioned *aither* as a hotter, dryer, higher type of *aer*;[8] while Anaxagoras, similarly, perceived a system in which air became hotter and dryer (*aither*) as it moved away from the earth.[9] Whether influenced by Anaxagoras or Anaximenes,[10] Plato and Aristotle adopted a similar arrangement. In Aristotle and, it has been argued, perhaps also in Plato, *aither* was positioned as a fifth element that never changed, in contrast to the world of mortals, which comprised the other four elements.[11]

With the complexity and variety of conceptions of 'air', and its nature and role in the cosmos, as our context, we find myths of metamorphosis that relate to this element also taking a variety of forms. Here, I have set them out in three sections. The first section, 'Taken', includes stories in which young men and women are taken by gods or winds (or both). These tales draw our attention to the earthly absence that is created when a mortal is taken by a supernatural force or figure. Among them are stories in which the air itself becomes personified, taking the form of violent winds that work on mortal bodies. A subset of these stories, 'Katasterized', are the aitiologies of constellations, telling of men and women who are snatched from earth and set in the heavens. This section ends with a brief consideration of the story of Iphigeneia, and how her experience of being taken interacts with another mytheme of sacrifice. This is also relevant to stories in the

[6] Graham 2010 (1), Herakleitos F52 [F32a] (= DK 22 B76b = Plutarch *On the 'E' at Delphi* 392c). Kirk (1954: 316) explicitly suggests *pur aeizōon* (see Graham 2010 (1), Herakleitos F47 [F29] = DK 22 B30 = Clement *Miscellanies* 5.103.6 and Simplicius *On the Heavens* 294.15–16) 'probably refers primarily to' *aither*. As he explains, the Stoics derived the idea (perhaps directly from Theophrastus' interpretation of Herakleitos F31) that there was a cosmogonical theory of ekpyrosis in Herakleitos. See Christidis 2009 for a detailed argument that Herakleitos presented a quasi-ekpyrosis.

[7] Graham 2010 (1), Herakleitos F91 [F58] (= DK 22 B120 = Strabo 1.1.6).

[8] As Kingsley (1995: 24–31) points out. Empedokles on breath (see Graham 2010 (1), Empedokles F127 [F78] = DK 31 B100 = Aristotle *On Youth, Old Age, Death and Respiration* 473b9–474a6) suggests that (as Wright argues) Empedokles made no distinction between *aither*, air, and breath; but this is likely to be a result of corruptions introduced by Aristotle's transmission of the text (Kingsley 1995: 27).

[9] Graham 2010(1), Anaxagoras F35 [F18] (= DK 59 15 = Simplicius *Physics* 179.3–6).

[10] Wright (1995: 113) argues for Anaxagoras; Graham (2015) argues that Plato sees Anaximenes as a pluralist, not a monist, and draws on his theory of matter.

[11] Arist. *De Caelo* 270b12–17. That Plato has already recognized *aither* as a fifth element in his *Kratylos* (possibly influenced by his young pupil) is argued by Sedley 2003: 14–15.

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next section, 'Falling', where we turn to women and men who throw themselves off high places into air so as to save their cities. In some cases, this action simply results in their death, but some of these men and women jump and are transformed, either into a different life, or into a different being. In turn, some of these stories intersect with the last section of this case study: 'Into Birds' explores the emotionally turbulent, often horrific, tales of men and women who are transformed into birds. Finally, in the conclusion, I consider the emotional significance of these stories, which draw attention to what we may now recognize as 'flag' or 'faint' responses to extreme events and emotions.

Taken

We turn, first, to stories of men and women who are removed from the earth by, and/or into, some part of the air by gods and other supernatural beings. If we start with young women, we can think of Persephone, taken by her uncle Hades, as one particularly famous example. The earliest extant telling of that story is by Hesiod in the *Theogony*; that version describes the young woman taken by Hades as 'bestowed by Zeus' and does not mention her return. A longer and more elaborate version is found in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (2), which explores that goddess's responses to the loss of her child and provided a cultic map for celebration of the Eleusinian Mysteries. In both versions, we notice the verb used is the same—a form of *anarpazein*—Persephone is 'snatched.'[12]

Among those mortals who are similarly 'snatched' away to serve the gods, we can count a number of young men, perhaps most famously, Ganymede, who is taken by Zeus to be his cupbearer;[13] while Eos ('Dawn') 'snatches' Kleitos,[14] Kephalos,[15] (their son is Phaethon, who is snatched by Aphrodite[16]), Tithonos[17]—and, with a slightly different verb, meaning 'taken'—Orion.[18] Of these young men, some manage the transition to their new status, such as Ganymede, Kleitos, Kephalos. But some are punished for it by other gods—Orion, for example, is, at least in one version of his life story, killed by Artemis.[19] Tithonos illustrates most clearly the problem of the mortal body in the immortal world: Eos' request that Tithonos become immortal is granted,

[12] Hes. *Theog.* 912–914 (914 *ērpase*) and *Hom. Hymn Dem.* (l. 19 *harpaxas*). There are numerous vase images, but these are only certainly identified from the fifth century (Gantz 1993: 67) and are often of Persephone's return.

[13] *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (5) 202–217 and Hom. *Il.* 20.234–5. [14] Hom. *Od.* 15.251.

[15] Eur. *Hipp.* 455. [16] Paus. 1.3.1. [17] *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (5) 218–238.

[18] Hom. *Od.* 5.121 uses *heleto*. Nagy (1990: 243–245) discusses verbs for 'snatching' in these instances.

[19] Killed by Artemis for his relationship with Eos: Hom. *Od.* 5.121–124; Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.4.3 with 1.4.4 (this seems to be the import of the story, but that he is carried off by Eos to Delos and then killed on Delos by Artemis is mentioned in the narrative without a clear connection). There are many other versions of Orion's death: see Gantz 1993: 271–273.

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but Zeus does not give him youth, and he becomes older and older, until Eos shuts him away in a room, mumbling to himself.[20]

Gods, in myths, were not the only ones that were understood to abduct mortals; in both myth and in the real world, winds did this, too. We find an example of this in the striking description of the snatching of Ganymede by Zeus in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (5). There, the narrator relates how Zeus carried off Ganymede; and, when the story is focalized through Ganymede's anxious father, then the abductor is pictured as an *aella*—another term for a storm wind.[21] The contrast of focalizations illuminates the ways in which the landscape could offer affordances for understanding the experience of a sudden death, intertwining the supernatural and the horribly mundane.

The same, violent image of being 'snatched' is also frequently used to describe deaths at sea—specifically by the action of a storm wind, the *harpuia*. In Homeric epic, it is how Telemachos expresses his fears about the whereabouts of his father, Odysseus;[22] how Penelope voices her concerns, in turn, about Telemachos;[23] and how the swineherd Eumaios explains what has happened to Odysseus, to Odysseus himself, disguised as a stranger.[24] Thus, when Penelope, in her anguish at her situation, wishes for one of two endings—either to be killed by the goddess, Artemis, or, like the daughters of Pandareos, to be snatched away by the harpies to serve the Erinyes—she is both recognizing that she, like the Pandareids, will never return to her happy married life, and seeking a death that (she assumes) is like that of her husband.[25] She makes clear the windy nature of these snatching forces, calling them first *thuellai*, and then in her second description of the abduction, *harpuiai* or 'harpies'.[26]

And she is not the only woman, in Homeric epic, to make such a wish. Her form of words may be referencing those of Helen, in the *Iliad*. In that poem, in the midst of the war, Hector comes upon Paris sitting with Helen, and chides him for his 'desisting from hateful war'. Paris protests that he means to take part and admits that Helen has said similar things to him. Helen, meanwhile, invites Hector into the room and agrees with him. She also professes her own feelings about herself: she wishes that, on the day of her birth, 'an evil storm wind' had snatched her up and borne her away, before recognizing that the gods have 'ordained these ills'—and, in that context, wishing she had made a better choice than Paris.[27]

It may be that this phrase is just a formula placed in the mouths of both these women as a way vividly to express a wish to end their suffering; but perhaps

[20] Hellanikos is the first to provide the story that he is transformed into a grasshopper (*FGrH* 4 F140), but the story does not occur again until the later Latin authors (see Serv. ad Virg. *Georg.* 3.328).
[21] *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (5) 202–3 (Zeus); 208 (*aella*).
[22] Hom. *Od.* 1.241. [23] Hom. *Od.* 4.727.
[24] Hom. *Od.* 14.371. [25] Hom. *Od.* 20.63–78.
[26] Their windy nature is also apparent in the names that Hesiod gave them (*Theog.* 267–269): *Aello* ('Stormwind') and *Okupete* ('Swift-foot').
[27] Hector chiding Paris: Hom. *Il.* 6.325–331; 'desisting from hateful war': Hom. *Il.* 6.330. Helen: Hom. *Il.* 6.345–59.

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Penelope's reference to a storm wind was intended to recall Helen's use of the image—and vice versa. If so, then it may offer a number of effects: these two descriptions of storm winds, one by the woman who was part of the cause of the war, and one by the woman who has suffered its effects, mark the long painful passage of time—and all the suffering—that these epic poems encompass. If this relationship is made, then Penelope's words may mark her recognition that her agonies, like those of Helen's, were ordained by the gods. But it may also mark her very different response. While it prompts reflection on the limited but possible agency of mortals, especially women, in the face of divine and male machinations, the idea of vengeance—in the figures of the Erinyes—also introduce the notion that this will not be the end, that there will be a new cycle of suffering.[28] Thus, the image of the storm winds, the harpies, in these contexts, while used to indicate a wish to escape, also evokes the violence and rapacity of war, and foreshadows the deaths that this brings.[29]

As this suggests, in ancient Greek culture winds themselves were also personified and understood as having agency—and feared as destructive forces. The most fully realized of the winds was Boreas, the North wind; the other cardinal winds had little extensive mythology.[30] Boreas features in what seems to be a local Athenian myth about the snatching of a young woman, Oreithyia, the daughter of Erechtheus. This myth seems to have developed in order to support a cult, in honour of Boreas, founded on the banks of the Ilissos in 487 BCE.[31] This was in thanks for the role of the wind in the defeat of the Persians: Boreas was

[28] The Erinyes have been mentioned twice before in contexts that relate to Penelope. When Antinoos' pleads with Telemachos that he punish his mother for her deceit towards them, Telemachos describes how, if he were to send his mother from the house, she would invoke the Erinyes upon him (Hom. *Od.* 2.135), and when Antinoos has thrown a footstool at Odysseus who is disguised as a beggar, he replies (Hom. *Od.* 17.475–476): 'But if beggars have gods and Furies to protect them, then before any marriage may the end of death come on Antinoos' (trans. Hammond 2000).'

[29] Other arguments concerning the meaning of this passage are dealt with in Eidinow 2019. These include Johnston's (1994: 150) argument that Penelope is expressing the desire to become a reproductive demon, because 'it might be easier to become one of them than to carry on in her own situation'; and Vermeule's (1981: 169) suggestion that being carried off by a winged creature may have been a particularly attractive type of death for women—the desire for it prompted by feeling 'stupid or uncertain'.

[30] I have examined elsewhere (Eidinow 2019) the lack of mythology around the characters of winds. Boreas, Zephyros, and Notos all feature briefly in Hesiod's *Theogony* (378–380), and reference is made to all four winds in the Homeric epics (not including those brief mentions where they are blowing): Hom. *Il.* 16.149–151, 23.193–202. As above (p. 64) Zephyros is a rival of Apollo for the love of Hyakinthos, and in some stories his jealousy is the cause of Hyakinthos' death. Zephyros becomes Boreas in Serv. ad *Ecl.* 3.63 and the *Second Vatican Mythographer* 181. Vases that seem to depict the story: Neuser 1982: 120–121; eight of the ten vases are from the first half of the fifth century BCE.

[31] In the earliest version, Oreithyia is snatched from the Athenian acropolis (Akousilaos: schol. Hom. *Od.* 14.533; Fowler *EGM* 1: 21 (no. 30); also see discussion Brulé 1987: 296). This version may have resonance with story patterns of young women jumping from the Acropolis; see discussion later in this case study. Later versions set the snatching at Ilissos (Pl. *Phdr.* 229b; Ap. Rhod. 1.215; Paus. 1.19.5; Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.15.2).

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understood to have wrecked the Persian fleet at Cape Sepias, near Artemision.[32] While the myth was brought to bear on the Athenian claims for supernatural support in their war with Persia, it may originally have expressed a perceived need by the community to propitiate this wind. Boreas was understood to be a snatcher of mortals in the real world, as ancient epitaphs for the dead at sea reveal.[33] And plentiful evidence—including elaborate cults, alongside mythic tales of human sacrifice—indicates that the winds were understood to be potentially extremely dangerous.[34]

A subset of these ancient stories of men and women being 'snatched' involves them being katasterized, that is, becoming stars. Our knowledge of these mythemes originates largely from the summary of a lost work said to have been by the third-century poet, scholar, and polymath, Eratosthenes of Kyrene; the summary is by an unknown author, dubbed pseudo-Eratosthenes.[35] The original work, it has been argued, was largely produced with a literary focus, Eratosthenes gathering stories of mythical tradition and filtering out their religious/philosophical content.[36] In assembling such a work, the author was involved in a long and complex cultural tradition, one which already knew of the presence of mythological figures ensconced in the heavens. The evidence suggests that those early traditions were less concerned to provide aitiologies and did not consider a heavenly role to preclude a simultaneous presence in earthly settings. In the many intervening years that original material was edited so as to follow the sequence of constellations found in another work on stars, the *Phainomena* of Aratus; indeed, some scholars believe that the original work was intended to accompany Aratus' text.[37] Either way, what has now come down to us (albeit in two versions) are over forty stories offering accounts of the origins of constellations (including the stars within those constellations), planets, and the Milky Way.[38] The result seems to have been highly influential on later texts with a similar focus, such as Hyginus' *De astronomia*.[39] Over time, and in the specific culture of the Hellenistic period, especially the Library of Alexandria and its scholars, katasterisms became more plentiful and far more detailed.[40]

[32] Hdt. 7.189. The development of this myth is traced in Eidinow (2019); cf. Finkelberg (2014).

[33] *AP* 7.397 (= Gow–Page, *GP* 2244–2249) Erykios of Thessaly; see also *AP* 7.303 (= Gow–Page, *HE* 350–355), and 7.495 (= Gow–Page, *HE* 90–95).

[34] See further Eidinow 2019.

[35] On the tradition surrounding Eratosthenes of Kyrene, see Geus 2002: esp. 211–223).

[36] Pàmias 2017.

[37] Martin 1956: esp. 37–126.

[38] The two versions are the *Epitome* and the *Fragmenta Vaticana*, each of which was edited and reorganized separately from the other, although they contain overlapping material. Robinson (2013: 447–448) offers a concise overview of the MS tradition; see also Pàmias 2004: 29–54.

[39] Most, but not all, scholars identify the Hyginus of the *De astronomia* with the author of the *Fabulae*, and some have argued that this is Gaius Julius Hyginus, librarian to the emperor Augustus: see Fordyce and Spawforth 2016 and Fordyce and Holford-Strevens 2015. For translations of these texts, see Hard 2015.

[40] Pàmias and Zucker 2013: 64; Pàmias 2017: 51; Pàmias 2019: 196–198.

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But while it may be that little religious or philosophical content remains, a number of familiar themes shape the stories of the katasterisms of groups of men and women. Turning to stories about women turned into stars, we find, for example, the Pleiades, who are individually named in an early unattributed source, and turned to stars, in many versions, to escape the pursuit of Orion. In some versions, there seems to be some confusion about whom Orion is pursuing—them or their mother.[41] In some accounts, the daughters have chosen to hunt with Artemis (that is, to remain maidens);[42] these also relay a version of the story in which they become birds (specifically doves) before they are then transformed into stars.[43] The ancients mostly favoured the derivation of 'Pleiades' from the cluster's connection to the seasons; its rising and setting marked periods of farming and seafaring (*plein*); but, as Kidd notes, the development of the name from the root of dove (*peleiades*), is most frequent in earlier sources, and is never forgotten.[44]

In turn, the collective name of the Hyades (they are named individually by Hesiod[45]), may have derived from the Greek for pig (*hus*), since the formation could suggest a pig's head.[46] In some later versions, the Hyades are linked with the Nysaean nymphs who nursed the infant Dionysos; their saving him from Lycurgus led to Zeus katasterizing them from gratitude.[47] An overlap with the Pleiades occurs in the version of the story which makes them the daughters of Atlas. There, they are twelve or fifteen in number, and they die of grief after the death of their brother, Hylas (killed by a wild boar or lion). Then the cohort is katasterized in stages: at first only five of them are placed among the stars as Hyades, and then seven (or ten) others follow under the name of Pleiades.[48]

Finally, there are the Hyakinthides. Apollodoros provides one account:[49] in this, they are the daughters of a Spartan, called Hyakinthos, who has come to live in Athens. The city is under siege by King Minos, who prays to Zeus for

[41] Names: Hes. F118 (Most 2018b). Their father is Atlas, so, to explain the name 'Pleiades', the sources seem to have invented their mother, one Pleione, a nymph with no other tradition (see Gantz 1993: 213). The story of Orion's pursuit of the daughters is possibly in the epic cycle (schol. *Il.* 18.486) and may also be alluded to in Hes. *Op.* 619–620 and Pind. *Nem.* 2.10–12 (but Aristarchos in the scholia on this passage offers a story in which the mother is pursued). The mother is pursued, but the daughters katasterized in Hyg. *Astronom.* 2.21.4 and Athen. 11.490d–e; cf. the pursuit of the girls in Aratus *Phain.* 254.

[42] Schol. Hom. *Il.* 18.486.

[43] In schol. Hes. *Op.* 382, schol. Hom. *Il.* 18.486, and schol. Aratus *Phain.* 254–255, a story is recorded that the maidens are changed first into doves and then become stars.

[44] Kidd 2004: 275; see schol. Aratus, *Phain.* 254–255.

[45] Hes. F227 (Most 2018b).

[46] As much as it does a bull's head (which is the constellation that the Hyades create, as a cluster), see Kidd 2004: 246.

[47] See Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.4.3; Hyg. *Fab.* 182, 192; Hyg. *Astronom.* 2.21; Ov. *Fast.* 5.167. Pherekydes *FGrH* 3 F 90a–c seems to have been the first to link them with the Dodonaean nymphs that nursed the infant Dionysos.

[48] Hyg. *Fab.* 192; Ov. *Fast.* 5.181; Eustath. ad Hom. p. 1155.

[49] Harding (2008: 216) argues that this is the 'traditional' story, by which he seems to mean the most widely known.

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vengeance on the Athenians, who are then beset with famine and plague. The girls are sacrificed over the tomb of Geraistos, in accordance with an oracle, in order to free the city from suffering.[50] Further versions exist: Photios lists six daughters and then observes that two of them (Protogeneia and Pandora) gave themselves to be killed on their country's behalf, when a Boiotian army had invaded.[51] Photios reports Phanodemos' work when he notes that they were 'slaughtered on behalf of the Sphendonians(?) on the hill called Hyakinthos'—and that is how they obtain their name as Hyakinthides.[52] While they do not seem to be katasterised, I include them here because of an elision by Euripides, in his play, *Erechtheus*, between the daughters of Erechtheus (whose story of self-sacrifice I tell later in this case study) and this group of women: Athena who is detailing the fates of each protagonist, instructs their mother, Praxithea, that:[53]

> in recognition of their nobility, as they did not allow themselves to forsake their pledges to their dear sister. Therefore these girls' souls have not gone down to (Hades), but I have lodged their spirits in the heaven, and shall establish for them a renowned name—'Hyacinthid goddesses'—which mortals shall call them by throughout all Greece.

Thus, the Erechtheidai become the 'Hyakinthidai'—and are set in the sky as stars.

The tale of Metioche and Menippe, daughters of Orion, is also a tale of sacrifice leading to katasterism, at least in Ovid and Antoninus Liberalis (the latter attributing the story to Nicander and Korinna).[54] The story takes a familiar form: plague afflicts Aonia—the use of this archaic name for Boiotia signals the story's intention to evoke an ancient landscape—and an oracle from Apollo at Gortyn demands the sacrifice of 'two willing maidens' to the two gods of the Underworld. The women, whose dedication to their weaving has been emphasized throughout the narrative, drawing attention to their dutiful, domestic natures, volunteer; they kill themselves using their own bodkins. Persephone and Hades take pity on them: their bodies disappear, and they are borne up into the sky as comets. Meanwhile, the people of Aonia set up a temple at Orchomenos to the two women, and young men and young women bring them propitiatory offerings each year—calling them 'Koronides'.[55]

[50] Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.15.8. See also Diod. 17.15.2; Hyg. *Fab.* 238 (one daughter; but the passage is corrupt); Harp. *s.v. Hyakinthides*, and Steph. Byz. *s.v. Lousia* (λ 88) gives one of the names of the daughters—Luisa.

[51] Phot. *s.v. Parthenoi.*

[52] Phanodemos *FGrH* 325 F 4 (Jones 2013).

[53] Euripides *Erectheus* 69–74 (Collard and Cropp 2008). On the Erechtheidai, see p. 85.

[54] Ov. *Met.* 13.685–699 (and see Hardie 2024 ad loc. for the role of the story in creating a parallel between Thebes and Troy. Ant. Lib. *Met.* 25 = Korinna F 656 (Campbell 1992); it is attributed to '*Feroiōn*' the meaning of which is now thought to be 'Narratives', see Heath 2017: 100–104; Ant. Lib. *Met.* 25 gives it as the title of one of Korinna's books, see Page 1953: 30.

[55] In Ovid's version, two young men arise from the remains of their cremated bodies—the so-called Koroni, who may be related to the Koronides.

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A number of themes emerge from stories of katasterisms of individual women: first, the riling of the gods through pride. Kassiopeia is well known for her daughter's story: Andromeda was exposed to a sea monster and subsequently saved by Perseus.[56] Less well known is that Andromeda was being punished for her mother's claim that she was as beautiful as the Nereids.[57] Her mother, Kassiopeia, was herself also punished, by being katasterized, seated on a chair close to Andromeda. According to Hyginus, 'On account of her impiety, as the sky turns, she seems to be carried along lying on her back.'[58] The story of Kallisto and Arkas also includes this theme, but the katasterizing version introduces another facet, this time of divine pity—following great suffering.[59] Ps.-Eratosthenes quotes a lost work of Hesiod and describes Kallisto a daughter of Lykaon, the Arkadian king (although some sources say that Hesiod described her as a nymph loved by Lykaon;[60] and the local historian Araithos of Tegea made her the granddaughter of Lykaon, daughter of Keteus[61]). She is a follower of Artemis, occupied with wild beasts—and this set-up may indicate a familiar mytheme of pride before a fall. She is raped by Zeus (some sources say that he is disguised as Artemis, others as Apollo[62]). She conceals her pregnancy for as long as she can, but it is discovered. In Hesiod's version, as reported by ps.-Eratosthenes, it is Artemis who makes this discovery and, enraged at Kallisto's apparent lack of fidelity, turns her into a bear—and she has her son Arkas.[63] Some versions say that she is shot at the point of discovery: Pausanias recounts how Hera in rage turned Kallisto into a bear, and Artemis shoots her; Zeus sends Hermes to rescue the child in her womb and sets Kallisto in the stars as the Great Bear constellation.[64] In yet further versions, she seems to have survived a little longer as a bear in Arkadia.[65] Ps.-Eratosthenes and Hyginus give a version in which Arkas finds his mother in the forest there and almost kills her; a version of the story that Ovid uses.[66] Hyginus has Arkas recognize his

[56] Lyk. *Alex.* 834–846. [57] Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.4.3.

[58] Hyg. *Astronom.* 2.10: the passage refers to Euripides and Sophocles mentioning Kallisto's boasting.

[59] See Sale 1962 for an overview of the different versions. I have not included the story of Ariadne, because the katasterism appears to be of her crown and not her body (Ov. *Fast.* 3.459–516), but this too features a katasterism prompted by pity.

[60] See Eust. ad Hom. *Il.* 2.608 = Hes. F114 (Most 2018b) and Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.8.2 = Hes. F115 (Most 2018b).

[61] Hyg. *Astronom.* 2.6.2 = Araithos *FGrH* 316 F2b.

[62] According to [Hyginus] *Astronom.* 2.1–2 (= Araithos *FGrH* 316 F2a), Amphis, the fourth century BCE comedy writer, described how Zeus tricked Kallisto into sleeping with him by disguising himself as Artemis. Ovid (*Met.* 2.401–530) also includes this detail although his description includes Kallisto's realization, maintaining the violence of the encounter (425–438); Apollodoros (*Bibl.* 3.8.2) includes it as a variant, and notes another—that Zeus disguised himself as Apollo.

[63] [Erat.] *Katast.* F1; also told by Hyg. *Astronom.* 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 (because she blames Artemis for her pregnancy).

[64] Paus. 8.3.5–6. Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.8.2: Zeus gives the baby to Maia to raise.

[65] In Hyginus' longer version (2.1.2) she is captured by Aitolians and taken to Arkadia as a gift for King Lykaon.

[66] See [Erat.] *Katast.* I 8R; Hyg. *Astronom.* 2.4.1; Ov. *Met.* 2.401–507, esp. 496–507.

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mother and chase her into the inner shrine of Zeus, where both are almost killed by the Arkadians and Zeus rescues them both by katasterism. He has another version where she is killed as a bear by Artemis, and then later recognized by her and katasterized.[67] Ovid's version calls out a strong underlying theme of the story (and many other stories like it), when he places emphasis on the emotion of loneliness.[68] In his account, we see Kallisto unable to attract the attention of her former divine lover; forced to run from her family (cowering from the dogs of Lykaon as he hunts); and unrecognizable to her own son, who almost shoots her—until Zeus removes them both from mortal life and sets them in the stars.

Erigone's transformation into a star includes some similar themes, including pity and relief from suffering. It may be a relatively late addition to her myth, since she is better known for her aitiological role in the rite of the Aiora ('Swing') festival, arising from her suicide by hanging. There are two myths to account for this death, both, in the end revolving around the notion of revenge: in the first, she is mourning her father, King Ikarios of Athens. He has shared his gift of wine (from Dionysos) with his people; its effects lead them to believe he has poisoned them—and they kill him. Erigone hangs herself from the tree where she has discovered the body.[69] Hyginus goes on to describe how young women in Athens then died, committing suicide without a cause: Erigone had sworn that this would happen if the cause of Ikarios' death was not investigated and avenged. An oracle of Apollo is involved in setting up the Aiora, which Hesychius tells us was originally called the Aletis.[70] A swing was erected and those who swung were called Aletidai (after Erigone who wandered in search of her father with the god).[71]

In the second version, Erigone has become part of the Orestes myth: a daughter of Aigisthos and Klytemnestra, who seeks her half-brother in order to punish him for killing her parents.[72] There is a certain assimilation with the Erinyes. She either kills herself from grief after Orestes is acquitted—and the story of the founding of the Aiora is repeated[73]—or (according to Hyginus) she is rescued from Orestes by Artemis, and, like Iphigeneia becomes a priestess of Artemis, but in Athens.[74] Hyginus in the *Astronomia* mentions briefly that Jupiter set Ikarios, Bootes, and Erigone, as *Virgo* ('the Virgin') among the stars, out of pity for their grief.[75] Later in the work, he gives an alternative story for the origin of the

[67] Hyg. *Astronom.* 2.1.3. [68] Ov. *Met.* 2.401–507.
[69] Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.14, Ael. *NA* 7.28. [70] Hesych. *s.v. Alētis* (2953).
[71] *Etym. Mag. s.v. Alētis* (62.5–12), which also gives Erigone a number of different possible parents; it also notes that the same name is given by some to Medea and to Persephone.
[72] Apollod. *Epit.* 6.25; *Marm. Par.* A 25 seems to indicate that she faces Orestes in court.
[73] *Etym. Mag. s.v. Aiōra* (42.1–9).
[74] Hyg. *Fab.* 122. Iles Johnston (1999: 219) says that this version was developed by the comic poets—she cites Paus. 2.18.6, but this gives a reference to an account by Kinaithon, a Spartan epic poet. Apollod. *Epit.* 6.28 includes a variant in which Orestes marries Erigone.
[75] Hyg. *Astronom.* 2.4.2. Erigone was also linked to Virgo (e.g., Virg. *Georg.* 1.33; Hyg. *Fab.* 130; Man. *Astronom.* 4.542–546); but so were other goddesses, including Astraea, Dike, Demeter, Isis, Atargatis, and Tyche; see Lewis 2023: 119–120.

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constellation *Virgo* as Parthenos, daughter of Apollo and Chrysothemis: because Parthenos died young, Apollo set her in the stars.[76]

An additional theme emerges for male figures who, in some versions of their stories, are transformed into stars: katasterism as a reward for particular acts. Thus, while for Orion katasterism occurs in some stories as part of the outcome of his pursuit of the Pleiades, another version survives, in which we see him rewarded for his manliness, set in the stars alongside the massive scorpion that Earth sent to kill him.[77] A number of other constellations memorialize his exploits—often with the creature that he has killed alongside him.[78] Finally, we can consider how this narrative pattern emerges in the story of Aetos, reported only by Servius, which appears to be based on the tale of Ganymede, as well as being a part of it.[79] Aetos, a Kretan boy, is Jupiter's companion on Krete. He is turned into an eagle by Juno and is rewarded for bringing Ganymede to Jupiter by being set in the stars alongside the boy.

Overall, we have, just as an ancient commentator did, identified themes of pity and honour shaping these tales.[80] But while we can identify these leitmotifs, we also have to remember that it is too simple to attribute only one story to each constellation; nor are these different stories always about valour.[81] Indeed, for some constellations, a variety of tales about diverse male figures, attach to the same constellation and for very different reasons. Take, for example, the constellation known as Ophiuchus, 'the snake-carrier'. Hyginus records a variety of myths that say this constellation was, originally: Carnabon, a king of Thrace who tried to kill Triptolemus; Herakles, transformed for fighting a snake in Sagaris; Triopas, who betrayed Ceres (Demeter); Phorbas, who stopped a plague of snakes on Rhodes; Asklepios, killed by Zeus for bringing a man back to life and katasterized for being the son of Apollo.[82]

This reminds us again of the fluidity of myth, and how it offers different narrative possibilities across communities and individuals. But we also see here the presence of particular narrative patterns. These stories of men and women being 'snatched' from their communities can be read as indicating the perceived and potential risks of the surrounding landscape, and the more-than-human power that comprised it, and that it contained. Couched in terms of divine assault, these

[76] Hyg. *Astronom.* 2.25.1.

[77] [Erat.] *Katast.* 32. Pàmias (2019: 198) notes how the katasterisms present a 'dual perspective of the mythical figure: on the one hand, it encapsulates a mythical biography, including the main achievements and deeds of the hero; on the other hand, the placement in the sky of a demi-god or a hero for commemorative reasons as a paradigmatic and perpetual example'.

[78] For example, ps.-Eratosthenes and Hyginus identify the constellation Drako as the dragon set to guard the apples of the sun, and killed by Herakles who kneels above him, as the constellation 'the Kneeler': [Erat.] *Katast.* 4 and Hyg. *Astronom.* 2.6.1 (but this then goes on to give a range of other possible interpretations, 2.6.2–7).

[79] Serv. ad Virg. *Aen.* 1.394.

[80] D schol. Hom. *Il.* 18.486c (with thanks to the anonymous reader for OUP for this reference).

[81] Cf. for example: Pàmias 2019.

[82] Hyg. *Astronom.* 2.14.1–6. On the story of Asklepios, see the case study Fire, p. 120.

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mythemes evoke a landscape replete with bodies at risk, which also posed risks. And the narrative patterns that underpin them may also lead us to insights into the experience of particular, and gender-specific, real-life events. Perhaps, alongside their fantastical elements, they also offer some sense of social experiences—the shock of leaving the natal home for a marital role; the devastation of warfare; the distress of grief. But while it is easy to think of these stories in terms of assaults, and a dynamic of 'removal' as violent and destructive, as we have seen there are also stories here in which that same pattern suggests, for its protagonists, a form of safety, an escape from the pain and contingency of mortal experience.

We end this section with a final story that illustrates the complexity of this dynamic of 'removal'—that of Iphigeneia. In a number of versions of the story of the Trojan War, the Greek leader, Agamemnon, is told that he must sacrifice his daughter Iphigeneia, to appease Artemis, whom he has offended with his boasts about his hunting prowess.[83] In most fifth-century versions of this story, Iphigeneia simply dies when she is sacrificed.[84] Nevertheless, earlier versions of the tale describe Artemis as, in some way, saving Iphigeneia: in one, given in the epitome of the *Kypria* she substitutes a deer and then whisks Iphigeneia away to the Tauroi where she becomes immortal; the verb used is a form of the now-familiar 'snatch.'[85] In other versions (although this may be an interpolation) the goddess substitutes an *eidolon* or 'image' of her, while she is transformed into an immortal being.[86] In some versions this entity is identified as Artemis Enodia ('Of the wayside');[87] others call her Hekate.[88] The sequence of events that lead to that transformation are played out in Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Aulis*, in which, having been told by her father that she is to marry Achilles, and discovering this is a ruse to bring her to the army camp, it is Iphigeneia who voluntarily decides to sacrifice herself. Her salvation is described by a messenger who has witnessed how a deer was substituted for her daughter, and the daughter has now 'flown to meet the gods.'[89] But in his *Iphigeneia in Tauris*, Euripides offers a different version: we meet Iphigeneia after she has been snatched away from the sacrifice by Artemis, to the Tauroi, and transformed from a maiden into a killer-priestess, sacrificing strangers to the goddess.[90]

[83] Homer makes no mention of a daughter called Iphigeneia or Iphimede, while Iphianassa (Hom. *Il.* 9.144) cannot be taken to be the same woman (Gantz 1993: 582). See Kyriakou 2006: 20–21, and on the different versions of the Iphigeneia myth, see Hulton 1962: 364–368; Hollinshead 1985: 420–430; Brulé 1987: 180–203; Dowden 1989: 10–24; Aretz 1999: 47–229. On the relationship between Iphigeneia and Artemis/Hekate, see Johnston 1999: 238–249, and Kearns 2023: 6–7 for a succinct and rich overview of the cults to Iphigeneia.

[84] See Pind. *Pyth.* 11.22–23; Aesch. *Ag.* 184–257, 1412–1421, 1555–1559; Soph. *El.* 530–576; also Eur. *An.* 624–625; *El.* 1018–1029; *Tr.* 370–372; *Or.* 658–59; and Kyriakou 2006: 21.

[85] Procl. *Kypr.* 8; the verb used is *exarpasasa*.

[86] Hesiod *Catalogue of Women* FF19.19–23 (Most 2018b), where she is Iphimede, and is rescued from the sacrifice by Artemis who (if the supplements are correct) preserves her flesh with ambrosia.

[87] Hesiod *Catalogue of Women* FF19.19–23 (Most 2018b).

[88] Hes. F20 (Most 2018b).

[89] Eur. *IA* 1608.

[90] As Iphigeneia herself describes in the prologue to the play: Eur. *IT* 1–66.

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Whether she becomes a priestess or a goddess, both transformations of Iphigeneia are, importantly, figures of power. While we can read her choice to be sacrificed fairly straightforwardly as her simply taking on the received role of a woman in ancient Greek society, or prefiguring in myth the historical activity of a rite of passage, other readings have emerged from studying her portrayal by Euripides.[91] In *Iphigeneia in Aulis*, for example, Dina Bacalexi has argued that she moves not into the role of dutiful daughter (or bride) but into the role of leader, giving orders to her husband, taking the position of leader where her father appears to be too weak: 'Her "change of mind" (acceptance of the sacrifice) is in fact a "change of state": from maiden and daughter to army leader.'[92] This transformation reaches beyond the single figure of Iphigeneia to the other female characters on the stage, seen through the antiphonal nature of the ending of the play. As Naomi Weiss observes, 'This evocation of the paeanic genre inverts the gender roles it usually entails: whereas performances of paeans outside tragedy were almost exclusively male, here a female chorus answers the opening song of a female leader.'[93]

This depiction of Iphigeneia, albeit by a famously provocative playwright, offers us a view of her self-sacrifice that shifts our perspective: Iphigeneia is not alone, but stands with her community. She is not acted-upon, rather she chooses to act. No longer only an instrument of the power of others, she is herself powerful, even before she is taken by the goddess. It is an approach to her story that draws attention to her metamorphosis, raising questions about our expectations of the process—not only where and what we are looking for, but also when we understand it to begin. Iphigeneia's story brings together narrative patterns of snatching and salvation, and introduces a further theme, of sacrifice, both the requirement to be sacrificed and the choice to sacrifice oneself. This theme is one that shapes the next section, as we turn to those figures of myth who jump out into air, and are changed.

Falling

Stories of men and women who jump out into air and fall towards solid ground are a relatively rare narrative pattern in Greek myth. (The more common narrative pattern sets the jump over sea, as we see in the case study, Water.)

[91] On taking on the received role, or as a rite of passage, see Foley 1981, 2001.

[92] Bacalexi 2016.

[93] Weiss 2018: 228. And, as she points out, the result is scarcely harmonious (230) 'The metrical disjointedness of the antiphony in the later play, with both Iphigeneia and the chorus singing astrophic songs, further underscores her separation from it at the same time as their joint performance highlights their communality.' She argues (231) that the repetitions that occur between the songs of Iphigeneia and that of the Chorus should therefore be seen as deliberate, rather than as evidence for either one being spurious.

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Nevertheless, in what follows, we will be examining this mytheme of transformation as a result of jumping out over solid ground, and exploring some narrative patterns that intersect with this mytheme, which draw us into stories of self-sacrifice and being sacrificed. A cluster of these are set in Athens and involve groups of sisters. Among the most well known is the story told about the daughters of Kekrops, mythical king of Athens, who are given the child of Gaia, Erichthonios, to guard; he is in a chest, which they are told not to open.[94] But, despite this warning, they do open it—and then leap to their deaths. These young women are powerful figures of cult: the location of the Acropolis is highly significant in this respect. But, as we will see, that and many other details of the myth remain uncertain: not only where they were, but also what they were running from, and even which of the daughters were involved.

In cultic reality, the shrines of the sisters were separate (Aglauros was at the eastern end of the Acropolis; Pandrosos by the Erechtheion; Herse, unknown), suggesting that they were independent figures before they became connected by this story.[95] In particular, the figure of Aglauros seems to have featured in this myth as a disobedient daughter and, in another, as the first priestess of Athens, who gave her life for the city; in this persona she was also the divine patroness of the Athenian ephebes.[96] Both Aglauros and Pandrosos were closely connected to Athena Polias, and enjoyed attention in the festivals of the Arrephoria (Pandrosos's name as cult recipient followed that of Athena Polias); and the Plynteria and Kallynteria (Aglauros's name comes after Athena Polias).[97]

Returning to the various versions of this story: Kreusa in Euripides *Ion* (273–274) notes that the young women opened the container holding the baby and jumped from the Acropolis (she gives no details of why or what they saw).[98] Euphorion mentions the 'Glaukopion' which may be Mount Lycabettos, the Acropolis or Parthenon.[99] A later source, Hyginus, describes the three women as jumping into the sea, drawing on a familiar mytheme that will be discussed in more detail in the case study, Water, in this volume.[100] Illustrating the relationship

[94] E.g., and discussed in more detail below: Eur. *Ion* 273–274; Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.14.6; Hyg. *Fab.* 166; Paus. 1.18.2. Events that precede the jump include the attempted rape of Athena by Hephaistos; see ps.-Eratosthenes, *Katast.* 13, who mentions a play by Euripides that discusses these events.

[95] For the role of these figures before they became connected through this story see Kearns 1989: 26.

[96] On the complex mythemes of the figure of Aglauros, see Sourvinou-Inwood 2011: 26–36. As priestess who saves the city through sacrifice: Philoch. *FGrH* 328 F105 and 106. On her role for the ephebes, see Dem. 19.303; Philoch. *FGrH* 328 F105; Plut. *Alc.* 15.7–8 and Parker 2005: 434.

[97] Sourvinou-Inwood (2011: 24-134) who has masterfully explored how and why these individual figures of cult were brought together in this myth; and the related development of the Athenian king Erichthonios from a more complex, earlier hero, Erechtheus. On the roles and positions of cult attention of Aglauros and Pandrosos, see *IG* II 3472 (first half of the second century BCE) and *IG* II 3515 (Augustan period), with Sourvinou-Inwood 2011: 29.

[98] Eur. *Ion* 273–274.

[99] See Lightfoot 2010 on Euphorion F11.4.

[100] Hyg. *Fab.* 166. If they are understood to jump from the Acropolis, then they cannot be understood to jump into the sea. We can compare his similar description of Aigeus jumping into the sea

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of myth with context, Pausanias says that it was on seeing Erichthonios that Herse and Pandrosos threw themselves down the steepest part of the Acropolis, and, unsurprisingly, it is this setting that is the important element for his description.[101] Folding the temporality of his narrative at this point, he smoothly moves into the fifth century, noting how this was the location for the incursion of the Persians who invaded the Acropolis (in 480 BCE) and the killing of those Athenians who 'thought they understood the oracle better than did Themistokles'. Thus, Pausanias emphasises a theme of human foolishness in the face of overwhelming force: those Greeks who misunderstood the crucial oracle about the invasion of this city resonate with those mythical women who disobeyed Athena.

There are a number of fifth-century pots that show scenes from this story (Figure 2.1); but they do not show the young women jumping. Instead, they depict the pursuit of these young women, either by a giant snake or by Athena.[102] Literary sources deal with this element in a variety of ways. In Pausanias' version the young women go mad when they open the chest, but he does not say what they see. Apollodoros gives two versions: in the first the sisters are destroyed by the serpent that they see coiled about the child; but he notes the existence of another version in which two of the sisters are driven mad because of the anger of Athena, and, for that reason, they throw themselves down the Acropolis.[103] The idea that it may be the sight of a monstrous child that drives the young women over the cliff seems to be a rationalizing device of later writers: for example, Hyginus is the earliest writer to record that the child may have been snake-like or part snake.[104] It has been suggested that this may be a confusion with his snake guardians or a transfer of Kekrops' notable characteristic; Gantz notes the earlier graphic evidence that shows the child to be entirely human.[105]

Similarly, as we have seen, not all the sources describe the women jumping.[106] Indeed, not all the sources, literary or visual agree that all the women were considered responsible, or died. The visual sources sometimes show one woman

(Hyg. *Fab*. 43, 242). Again, this is a story that is in some versions set on the Acropolis (Paus. 1.22.5), but Roman authors move the location; see discussion of this mytheme of jumping into the sea in the case study Water, pp. 160–165.

[101] Paus. 1.18.2 (trans Jones and Ormerod 1935, here and below).

[102] Birth of Erichthonios: see Figure 2.1. For images of the birth scene, see *LIMC* IV.1, 'Erechtheus', section 'A. Erichthoniosgeburt', Kron 1988. For images of the punishment of the Kekropidai, see *LIMC* I.1, 'Aglauros, Herse, Pandrosus', nos. 14-21; Kron 1981, including a red-figure cup in the manner of the Brygos Painter (first half of the fifth century; Frankfurt: Liebieghaus ST V 7; *LIMC* I.1, 'Aglauros, Herse, Pandrosus', no. 15) which depicts two women running towards a house/palace with a large snake in pursuit; and a lekythos by the Phiale Painter (second half of the fifth century; Basel BS404; *LIMC* I.1, 'Aglauros, Herse, Pandrosus', no. 19) which shows Athena seizing a woman, between them can be glimpsed the chest of Erichthonios with an emerging snake.

[103] Paus. 1.18.2; Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.14.6.

[104] Hyg. *Astronom.* 2.13.1–2 and Hyg. *Fab.* 166.

[105] Gantz 1993: 237.

[106] As we have seen in the case study, Earth, Ovid depicts Aglauros being turned to stone because of her envy of Herse and her attempt to prevent Hermes from getting to Herse. This may suggest that, instead, we should understand the finality of jumping not as leading to air but as leading to earth. Other sources omitting the leap include: Callimachus *Hekale* F70 (Hollis 1990); Amelesagoras *FGrH* 330 F1.

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Figure 2.1 Red-figure squat lekythos (oil vessel), *c.* 420–410 BCE, attributed to the Meidias Painter. The main panel shows the birth of Erichthonios. Gaia is seated, handing Erichthonios to Athena. Peitho (Persuasion) and Eudaimonia (Happiness) and other divine personifications accompany Aphrodite; the three women watching from above are probably the daughters of Kekrops. The Cleveland Museum of Art. Leonard C. Hanna, Jr Fund. 1982.142.
CC0 1.0 UNIVERSAL (www.clevelandart.org/art/1982.142).

detached from the other two, who are being pursued.[107] This is also the case with some of the later literary sources, which identify one or two women as responsible, and so list different numbers of daughters as dying.[108] What is clear, however, is the power of this mytheme, and its resonance through other stories.

[107] The red-figure cup in the manner of the Brygos Painter (first half of the fifth century; Frankfurt: Liebieghaus ST V 7; *LIMC* I.1, 'Aglauros, Herse, Pandrosus', no. 15, see above n. 102) shows one woman standing inside the palace with her father, holding out her arms to her sisters, one of the fleeing women holds a sprig, the other a flower. On a column-krater by the Orchard painter (first half of the fifth century; San Antonio Museum of Art 86.134.63; *LIMC* 1V.1, 'Erechtheus', no. 29; Kron 1988) a woman moves calmly away, watching two other women being pursued by Athena. The women are described in the Beazley Archive (6595) as 'one with flower (?), one with sprig (?)'; see also Gantz 1993: 237 (with source updates from https://gantzmythsources.net.)

[108] As Gantz (1993: 237) lists, with updated references:: Aglauros and Pandrosos: Amelesagoras *FGrH* 330 F1; Herse: Euphorion F11 (Lightfoot 2010); Aglauros: Ov. *Met.* 2.552–561; Aglauros and

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In Euripides' *Ion*, mention of the daughters of Kekrops immediately precedes a discussion between Ion and Kreusa of another group of young women who fall from the Acropolis. This is the sacrifice of the Erechtheids or Erechtheidai: Kreusa, who confirms the tale, also notes that she survived because she was the youngest of the daughters and still a babe in arms.[109] Kreusa's brief statement notes how her father sacrificed his daughters *pro gaias* 'for the land'. The setting Euripides gives is the invasion of Athens by Eumolpos: the daughters of Erechtheus are depicted here as saving the city by sacrificing themselves; they seem to die by falling. From the extremely fragmentary remains of Euripides' play, the *Erechtheus*, in the voice of Praxithea, their mother, we learn that the sacrifice of one daughter is required by Delphi, in order that Athens be saved.[110] In the end, all three daughters die, along with both Erechtheus and Eumolpos.[111]

The question of the identities of these young women is very complex. If we try to identify them individually, the extant material does not give their names. Later sources offer further information, but it remains confusing. Apollodoros, for example, provides the names of four daughters: Prokris, Kreusa, Chthonia, and Oreithyia. All of them, he tells us, die, but each of them has a life story that means that they cannot obviously participate in this story; for example, Oreithyia, who, as discussed above, is snatched by Boreas.[112] Some have suggested that while they share their names with women in other mythic stories, these sacrificed women are different.[113] But the apparently careless nature of this naming may also suggest that these young women were originally cyphers—figures of sacrifice, rather than named individuals—and any names they may have subsequently been given were simply attached to fill a narrative need. This suspicion seems to be further confirmed by the overlapping nature of these tales. Moreover, as we have seen, in Euripides' account of *Erechtheus* the story of the Erechtheidai collides with another set of sacrificed girls from another mytheme: the Hyakinthidai.[114]

A final group of sisters who fulfil this narrative pattern through being sacrificed for their city—although they do not die by jumping—are the daughters of

Herse: Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.14.6 and Pausanias 1.18.2; all three: Hyg. *Fab.* 166 and Hyg. *Astronom.* 2.13; Callimachus *Hekale* F17 (Hollis 1990). Suda *s.v. parthenos*, and Apostolius *Cent.* 14.7 state that of six girls, Protogonia and Pandora offered themselves for sacrifice. Ael. Arist. *Or.* 1.87 mentions one daughter only.

[109] Eur. *Ion* 279–280.

[110] Euripides *Erechtheus* F360 (Lycurgus *Against Leocrates* 100.7–10: Plut. *Mor.* 604D, with F981 subjoined; here and below, Collard and Cropp 2008). More than one daughter sacrificed: Dem. 60.27. One sacrificed but others also kill themselves: Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.15.4.

[111] Euripides *Erechtheus* 20–21, 65–69, 99.

[112] Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.15.1 and 3.15.4. For further details of the individual daughters' stories see Gantz 1993: 243–247.

[113] Gantz 1993: 243.

[114] Phanodemos *FGrH* 325 F4 also makes this identification; see Sourvinou-Inwood 2011: 93–94 for her analysis of his reasons. These have in turn been identified by an ancient commentator on Aratus (schol. Aratus, *Phaen.* 172) with the Hyades (a group of katasterised young women) but see Sourvinou-Inwood 2011: 123–134.

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Leos, or Leokoridai.[115] These young women first appear in a fourth-century funeral speech: they are anonymous figures there, simply recalled as representations of fervent patriotism, particular examples for the men of the deme of Leontis.[116] In later sources they do acquire names: Phrasithea or Praxithea, Theope or Theopompe, and Euboule.[117] There was a shrine, the *Leōkorion*, which was probably in the Athenian agora.[118] I add this final group of young women because once we start to set these stories side by side—both those young women who jump and those who do not—we begin to glimpse a 'deep map' of the city that evokes the patriotism of the mythic past. Here is a network of cult figures who offered the city protection, who were concerned with two areas that would have been closely associated in the ancient Greek mind, 'survival in critical times (especially victory in war) and the birth of children'.[119] This map extended not only topographically, but perhaps, also across the sky above: a heavenly spatial narrative.[120] For example, it seems that the rising of the Hyades and Auriga—the representation of Erechtheus/Erichthonios—coincided with specific and relevant festivals, held in honour of the Erechtheidai: the Chalkeia (when the weaving of Athena's peplos begins), the Kallynteria and Plynteria (when the olive-wood statue of Athena was washed and adorned). Moreover, these stars are best observed from the areas of the Acropolis where these rituals were performed.[121]

Before we leave this theme of sisters sacrificed, it is worth pointing out its currency also beyond Athens. We have noted already the story of Orion's daughters, in Boiotia, in stories of katasterism.[122] In addition, Pausanias tells the story of Androkleia and Alkis, the daughters of Antipoinos.[123] The Orchomenians are in battle against Herakles and the Thebans, and an oracle indicates that the gods require a human sacrifice to ensure the success of the city. Their father refuses to take on this role, so the two young women comply; they choose to die. And they then receive cult: their heroön, Pausanias reports, was in the sanctuary of Artemis Eukleia—that is, fittingly, Artemis 'of fair fame'.

Turning then to examples of the mytheme of jumping that involves male protagonists, we find a number of intriguing differences with those about women. To

[115] The Suda and Phot. *s.v. Leōkorion* mention a *heroon*); for further references see Wycherley 1957: 109–113.

[116] Dem. 60.29.

[117] Aelian 12.28 gives the name of the first daughter as Praxithea; the Suda (lambda, 262) as Phasithea, and Phot. *s.v. Leōkorion* as Phrasithea.

[118] For the difficulties of locating the shrine in the Agora, see Thompson and Wycherley 1972: 121–123.

[119] Kearns 1989: 61–63, (62 quotation). This is not to argue that these functions were clearly and uniformly expressed across the cults—rather, Kearns explores the associations of both myth and ritual to make this argument.

[120] On 'deep maps' and 'spatial narratives' see Bodenhamer, Corrigan and Harris 2015 and Bodenhamer 2015, and p. 25 in the Introduction.

[121] Boutsikas 2020: 126–130. She takes issue (130 and in more detail, 162–163) with Sourvinou-Inwood's (2011: 107–108, 131) assertion that the Hyades were related to the Eleusinian mysteries; but, as Boutsikas makes clear the Hyades do not rise at the right time for this relation to be made.

[122] See p. 76, this volume.

[123] Paus. 9.17.1.

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begin with, I have not found a story about a group of brothers jumping in this way, or, indeed, being sacrificed/sacrificing themselves, only about individuals. And even in these cases, there are few transformations into significant figures of cult. Theseus' father, Aigeus, who leaps from the Acropolis after glimpsing the (still) white sails of Theseus' returning ship, is motivated by grief and despair, rather than anger.[124] As we will see in the next section of this case study, grief is a common motivating force for men who jump from a high place and then become birds—but there is no metamorphosis in Aigeus' story.

Similarly, there is no metamorphosis in the story of Menoikeus, which features both narrative patterns of jumping onto hard ground and sacrifice. Menoikeus, son of Kreon, appears to have been a creation of Euripides, for his play, *Phoinissai*.[125] This is a story of self-sacrifice: Menoikeus kills himself for the sake of the city of Thebes, by throwing himself from a parapet into the den of a snake.[126] The death is to propitiate Ares and Ge for two crimes committed by Kadmos: the killing of a snake, and his slaughter of the Spartoi,[127] and it is to happen in the relevant spot.[128] Although his father tells him to flee, Menoikeus chooses to die, cutting his own throat before he jumps.[129] As discussed before, in examples in the case study, Earth, this form of death, featuring blood spilled on the ground, brings to mind sacrifices performed in hero cult. While there is no metamorphosis, Menoikeus' story seems to have later acquired a plant-related metamorphosis related to this spilling of blood, since Pausanias reports on the fruit from the pomegranate tree growing on Menoikeus' grave at Thebes that when they are cut open, they look as if they are filled with blood.[130]

Menoikeus is a rare example of men jumping from a height to their death, although there are others who choose to sacrifice themselves for their city, they do it in other ways.[131] There is, however, a narrative pattern related to jumping, one that does appear, horribly, also to have been a trope of actual punishment: the throwing of men off cliffs as a penalty for crimes. This was a punishment that was particularly related to religious crimes: at Delphi, Aesop is said to have been

[124] Paus. 1.22.4 and Plut. *Thes.* 22.1. This becomes an aitiology for the Aegean Sea.

[125] See Mastronarde 1994: 28; Teiresias the seer instructs Kreon that he must sacrifice his son: Eur. *Phoen.* 913–914.

[126] Eur. *Phoen.* 1009–1012.

[127] Eur. *Phoen.* 937.

[128] Bremmer (2015: 195) observes that it is not unusual in Greek myth for individuals to be killed on the spot where they have committed the crime that prompts their death. He does not discuss the fact that this is not Menoikeus' crime, but that of his ancestors. On this aspect, and on the web of reasons for Menoikeus' death, see Gagné 2013: 378–381. There is no evidence that Menoikeus received hero cult, see Schachter 1986: 125.

[129] Eur. *Phoen.* 997–998, 1009–1012, and 1090–1092.

[130] Paus. 9.25.1.

[131] Molpis: Lyk. *Alex.* 159–160 (no further information is available on this story, so it is unclear when it dates from) also discussed in case study, Earth, p. 44. Marathos appears to have given himself to be actually sacrificed (*sphagiasasthai*) in front of the line of battle between the Athenians and Tyndaridai: Plut. *Thes.* 32.5 attributed to Dikaiarchos (F66 Wehrli 1944), giving the town its name.

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killed by the Delphians in this way, ostensibly for stealing a cup.[132] In mythic accounts, it occurs as a way for those who are envious or hostile to dispose of their enemies: Theseus, for example, is pushed off a cliff by Lykomedes, who fears that Theseus will take his throne.[133] Another example finally brings us to a metamorphosis: Perdix is thrown off a tower by his uncle, the inventor Daidalos, who is envious of his ingenuity and inventiveness.[134] Rescued by Athena, he becomes a bird—the Perdix (partridge). And this brings us to the final section of this case study.

Into Birds

The case of Perdix introduces the final 'Air'-related metamorphoses, into birds. These stories belong in this category, I suggest, because their narrative pattern is also underpinned by a dynamic of 'removal', as the protagonists are snatched from their mortal lives to become airborne creatures. These tales, largely, but not only, told in later sources, bring our focus to bear on a number of violent events and emotions, signally different from the kinds of experiences that are highlighted by the previous stories of jumping. Here, the emphasis is primarily on the experience of grief, but there are also stories that highlight the impacts of other emotions, including excessive, transgressive, violent desire.

Let us remain with the theme of men jumping, even if the jump in this case seems to be an addition by Ovid to extant myth.[135] In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, we find Keyx, King of Trachis describing his brother Daidalion's metamorphosis to Peleus, who has been banished for killing his brother Phokos. In this tale, Daidalion's jump is prompted by the death of his daughter, Chione, who, famously, had children by both Apollo and Hermes: Autolykos and Philammon.[136] Foolishly she criticizes Diana's beauty, and the goddess swiftly punishes her,

[132] On Delphi in this context, see Eidinow 2024. Aesop's fate: Plut. *Div. Veng.* 557a = Perry *Test.* 24; *P.Oxy.* 1800 = Perry *Test.* 25; *Vita G*, 127–128 and 142; *Vita W* 142. Kurke (2010: 93) argues that, contrary to the intimations of the *Life of Aesop* traditions, Aesop did not receive hero cult at Delphi.

[133] Hornblower (2015: ad Lyk. *Alex.* 1324 and 1326) notes that the story may have been generated at Athens in the early fifth century, as a justification for Kimon's conquest of Skyros. In Paus. 1.17.6, Kimon's retrieval of the bones of Theseus from Skyros is described as avenging Theseus' death. In Plut. *Thes.* 35.3–36 the story of the murder and Kimon's retrieval of the bones is related; the Athenian poor, in particular, are said to be happy because Theseus is regarded as a particular champion of the poor and needy. In Plut. *Kim.* 8.3–6, the Athenians are said to have been wanting the bones back but to have been thwarted by the Skyrians who would not admit to the murder or permit a search of the island.

[134] We should note that in some sources, Perdix is the name of Daidalos' sister and the boy is Calos or Talos. Calos: Paus. 1.21.4 (see also 1.26.4 and 7.4.5); Suda and Phot. *s.v. Perdikos hieron*. Talos: Diod. Sic. 4.76; Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.15.9. Perdix: Ovid. *Met.* 8.241; Hyg. *Fab.* 39, 244; Serv. ad Virg. *Aen.* 6.14, *Georg.* 1.143.

[135] Ov. *Met.* 11.291–345 with Reed 2024b ad loc.

[136] Hes. F65 (Most 2018b), and Pherekydes *FGrH* 3 F 120 (but called in these older sources Philonis).

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shooting her dead with a single arrow. Her father Daidalion is filled with grief and tries to rescue her body as it burns on the funeral pyre; thrust back by the flames, he runs to Parnassos. But Apollo sees him, and as he launches himself from the top of the mountain, the god turns him into a hawk—a bird who 'vents his cruel rage on all birds, and, suffering himself, makes others suffer, too.'[137] The story of the daughter (in other traditions called Philonis) is well known, but Ovid is the only one to include these details about her father—apart from Hyginus, who appears to be following Ovid.[138]

Aisakos, who is also explored in the case study Water in this volume, provides a second example of a man who at least in one version of his story jumps from a rock in despair—but this is a jump into the sea. In the version recounted by Ovid, Aisakos shuns city life and lives in the wilds, where he sees and is attracted to the nymph Hesperia, daughter of the river Kebren. He pursues her, and in her flight she is killed by a snake. Aisakos takes to the cliff—and his transformation is achieved by Tethys,[139] into what kind of bird is not reported, although Ovid describes how Aisakos' emotional state meant that in this new form he repeatedly dived into the sea.[140] This version of the story is fuller than and different from the story of Aisakos recounted by Apollodoros, who reports that Aisakos' metamorphosis occurs because he is mourning his deceased wife, Asterope (also a daughter of Kebren).[141] Again, the type of bird is not mentioned in detail; nevertheless, this type of transformation, and the reasons for it—profound grief—become the theme for other transformations of this type.

Merops, Kyknos, Keyx, and the birds of Diomedes are all stories in which grief for the deceased plays a key role in the transformations of man into bird. The first three stories concern grief for spouses or lovers. Unlike Periphas or Aetos, the story of Merops, king of Kos, who is transformed into an eagle, involves a recognizably ancient name with a historical and philological connection to the location of his story. 'Merops' is given by Hesychius and Stephanos of Byzantium as the eponym of the people and island of Kos; it is also used to describe the inhabitants of Kos in the *Homeric Hymn to Delian Apollo*.[142] According to Antoninus Liberalis, Merops is an earth-worshipper; Stephanos of Byzantium describes him as earth-born.[143] In the account of his transformation in the scholia it is Rhea, whom he once entertained as a guest, who transforms him into an eagle, taking

[137] Ov. *Met.* 11.344–345 (trans. Miller 1916).
[138] Hyg. *Fab.* 200.
[139] Ov. *Met.* 11.749–795 with Reed 2024b ad loc. See also case study, Water, p. 172.
[140] Forbes Irving (1990: 224) suggests that Ovid may have been drawing on other stories for his more colourful narrative, including the story of Paris and Oenone, in which Paris abandons his first wife, the nymph Oinone: see Gantz 1993: 638–639 for the narrative and sources.
[141] Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.12.5. But note that Ovid's version seems to be repeated in Serv. ad Virg. *Aen.* 5.128 and Serv. Auct. ad Virg. *Aen.* 4.254; see Reed 2024b: 535.
[142] *Homeric Hymn to Delian Apollo* 2.42. Steph. Byz. *s.v. Kōs* (κ 315): *Meropes* are the inhabitants and *Meropis* the island called after his daughter. The link between Merops and Kos is also apparent in the fragmentary poem, the *Meropis*, on which see Lloyd-Jones 1990: 21–29.
[143] Ant. Lib. *Met.* 15; Steph. Byz. *s.v. Kōs* (κ 315).

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pity on him as he mourns unceasingly for his dead wife.[144] In the version given in the scholia, he then sits forever beside Zeus; in Hyginus, he is changed and then katasterized by Juno.[145] The story of Keyx I will come back to in more detail under the name of his similarly metamorphosed partner Alkyone, on whom the main version of the story focuses; and so I turn next to Ligurian Kyknos the son of Apollo and Thyrie.[146] This unpleasant, beautiful youth tortures his lover, Phylios, by setting him various impossible tasks (e.g., to kill a lion bare-handed). Phylios finally leaves him; so Kyknos throws himself into Lake Konope and disappears. His mother follows him, and Apollo turns them both into swans. In Ovid's version, the mother is called Hyrie and instead of experiencing a bird metamorphosis she creates a lake with her tears.[147]

Finally, the birds of Diomedes resemble other groups of birds that cluster around a dead hero, insofar as they appear to be grieving for that hero.[148] We can appreciate, with other scholars, the ways in which these kinds of 'hero birds' can be seen to offer 'a link between our world and the departed hero'.[149] But this particular set of birds provides a range of story narratives with different emphases, from the pain of grief to the role of the gods, to the challenges presented by settlement in a new land,[150] to the founding of a new cult.[151] Their story is first recorded in the fourth century BCE by the Italian history writer Lykos, who describes how on the island of Diomedeia there is a group of herons who are friendly to Greeks—to the extent that they come to rest in their clothing.[152] In Lykophron's *Alexandra*, the birds' daily activities are described in even greater detail:[153] in this version, they build city streets like those created in Zethos' Thebes, and they go out to hunt during the day like mortal men. They eat bread from visitors' hands

[144] Schol. Hom. *Il.* 24.293. [145] Hyg. *Astronom.* 2.16.

[146] According to Nicander and Areus, as recorded by Ant. Lib. *Met.*12.

[147] Ov. *Met.* 7.371; see also p. 152 on Hyrie. Forbes Irving (1990: 257) notes that Strab. 10.2.22 suggests that near Konope was a lake called Hydra and suggests that this approximates to Hyrie, thus, Ovid may be following an original version; but this is unconvincing.

[148] Kindt (2024: 243–272) discusses these birds as an example of how stories of metamorphosis offer reflection on what it means to be human; she does not consider the role of emotion in these narratives or in her wider analysis.

[149] See Forbes Irving 1990: 116–121 (citing Holland 1895 for 'hero birds') who argues that (119) 'the role of these birds as pointers to the other world is central'.

[150] Hornblower (2015: 258–259, ad Lyk. *Alex.* 594–595) has brought out the way in which this particular story of metamorphosis resonates with contemporary concerns relating to new settlement/colonization, citing Buxton 2009: 69 on Aristophanes' *Birds* and the theme of colonizers who lose their human shape; see also Malkin 1998: 238–239.

[151] The story of the cult of Diomedes in this area is now supported by archaeological evidence that demonstrates how widespread it was; while Diomedeia (one of the Tremiti islands) may have revealed few signs of cult activity, nearby Palagruza and Cape Ploča, Croatia, both suggest cult activity to Diomedes. For the epigraphic evidence for the cult: *SEG* 48.692bis–694; see Hornblower 2022: 81 and 2015: 259–260 ad Lyk. *Alex.* 599.

[152] *FGrHist* 570 F 6 (Smith 2013); Aelian provides very similar information 1.1, who describes the herons as still 'Greeks and Greek-lovers'. On Diomedes' cult in the West and the spatial myths surrounding these phenomena, see Hornblower 2015: 256–257 ad Lyk. *Alex.* 592–632.

[153] Lyk. *Alex.* 592–609.

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and whimper as they remember their former way of life. Lykophron states that Diomedes blames the transformation of his men on the anger of Aphrodite whom he wounded in battle, and Virgil also gives this report.[154] Ovid moves the immediate responsibility for the transformation to one Acmon, a companion of Diomedes, who rails against the goddess for her persecution of them.[155] Antoninus Liberalis provides a slightly different version in which the companions are attacked and killed by the Illyrians (not the local Daunians) while they are making funeral sacrifices to the dead Diomedes. By Zeus' order, the bodies of the slain disappear, and their souls become birds.[156]

When we turn to stories of women becoming birds, we also find groups that are transformed in a state of grief. The story of the Meleagrides also focuses on a tomb, this time of Meleager: these women were turned into birds of that name by Artemis, because they were mourning continually by the hero's tomb. The transformation seems to have taken place in Kalydon, before, we are told, the birds were moved by the goddess to the island of Leros,[157] where they are kept in the sanctuary of 'the Maiden' (Artemis?) and tended by the priests (they refuse to take care of their chicks, and so the priests do this).[158] Their relation to Meleager varies: in the versions by Antoninus Liberalis and Ovid they are his sisters; in Apollodoros they are simply 'the women who mourned the dead man';[159] Aelian describes how they sing of how they are his kin, even to this day.[160] There is a tradition that one or two women were not transformed (in the versions by Antoninus Liberalis and Ovid, Gorge and Deianeira remain in mortal shape). In his *Natural History*, Pliny attributes the idea that amber comes from the tears shed by the birds known as Meleagrides, but gives no information about the transformation itself.[161] Later in that same work, he discusses these birds again, describing how they fight in Boiotia in a similar way to the fighting of 'Memnonidai', birds that fly from Ethiopia to Troy and fight around the tomb of Memnon; but no information is given about a transformation.[162] It may be that the story of the Meleagrides is a local *aition* distilled from a more general myth, to account for the special treatment of these birds. As the Pliny passage suggests, it may be that this tradition has interacted with an older story of the birds of Memnon, which first appears in Ovid, but may be older than that.[163]

[154] Lyk. *Alex.* 610–13; Diomedes wounded in battle: Hom. *Il.* 5.336; Virg. *Aen.*11.271.
[155] Ov. *Met.* 14.483–511. [156] Ant. Lib. *Met.* 37. [157] Ov. *Met.* 8.533–546.
[158] Athen. *Deipn.*14.71, 655c. The worshippers of Artemis strictly abstained from eating the bird; the reason for the abstention was known to the natives of Leros (Ael. *NA* 4.42).
[159] Ant. Lib. *Met.* 2; Ov. *Met.* 8.533–46; Apollod. *Bib.* 1.8.3.
[160] Aelian *NA* 4.42. [161] Pliny *HN* 37.38 and 10.74(37).
[162] Pausanias 10.31.6: the local people describe how on stated days each year they go to the grave of Memnon, sweep that part that has no trees or grass, and sprinkle it with water from their wings.
[163] Forbes Irving (1990: 247) mentions the painting by Polygnotos at Delphi of the Underworld, which showed Memnon birds on the hero's cloak; see Paus. 10.31.6.

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A series of stories about groups of grieving women describe the origins of the halcyon birds. These stories may be cross-referenced to the category of women who throw themselves into the sea from grief. The daughters of Alkyoneus take this action after the death of their father.[164] Similarly, the daughters of Kinyras throw themselves into the sea after their father's death following his defeat in a musical contest; their father's name means mournful, the halcyon birds which they become are known for their mournful song.[165] Grief and throwing oneself into the sea is also in the story of the Ismenides or Aithyiai, daughters of Haliakmon the son of Haliartos, who were transformed by Hera as they grieved for Ino. Their story is told in Ovid, and is also found in the remains of a papyrus dictionary of metamorphoses.[166]

Other groups of women become birds because of their refusal to honour the gods appropriately.[167] The Minyades is a story of Dionysiac revenge, which is connected by Plutarch to a ritual for Dionysos at Orchomenos.[168] Aelian recounts how the three daughters, Leukippe, Arsippe, and Alkithoe refused to honour Dionysos from love of their husbands. But even as they sit at home industriously weaving, ivy, vines, and snakes envelop their looms; the three daughters stubbornly continue to refuse, and they then tear apart Leukippe's son (Antoninus Liberalis names him as Hippasos and reports that they do this as a sacrifice to Dionysos).[169] The other worshippers chase them away because of their *miasma*/pollution—and then they become flying creatures (a bat, an owl, and an eagle owl, according to Antoninus Liberalis; a crow, bat, and owl according to Aelian). In the version by Antoninus Liberalis there are strong connotations of death: he notes that it is Hermes who touches them with his wand, and that after their transformation they 'all three continuously avoided the light of the sun.' Plutarch's rather vague account does not include that the young women had been driven mad by Dionysos, only that they had a desire for human flesh and drew lots for which of their children they would consume—and that the lot fell on Leukippe's son Hippasos.[170] In Ovid, in contrast, their only crime is to tell stories as they hide from the Dionysiac festival outside, and they all become bats.[171]

[164] Eust. ad *Il.* 776, 33; see p. 163, in case study Water.

[165] Pind. *Pyth.* 2.15.

[166] Ov. *Met.* 5.543 and *P.Mich.* inv. 1447 (col. II. l.13). The dictionary includes a fragmentary reference to Aeschylus calling the *aithyiai* 'hating crows', but it is unclear what the connection is between the story and this reference; see Renner 1978. Eitrem (1925: 2300, *s.v.* 'Leukothea') had already suggested that the birds in Ovid's tale were *authyiai*, which is the bird into which Leukothea is changed in Hom. *Od.* 5.338.

[167] Forbes Irving (1990: 109) includes the story of the Minyades under the category of 'family disorder' in which he traces a strong theme of opposition between family order and the outside or animal world.

[168] Plut. *Quaest. Graec.* 38. Ant. Lib. *Met.* 10 reports this story as told by the poet Korinna as well as by Nicander.

[169] Ael. *VH* 3.42; Ant. Lib. *Met.* 10.

[170] Plut. *Quaest. Graec.* 38: Cf. Ael. *VH* 3.42 in which the women refuse the god out of love for their husbands. Ov. *Met.* 4.1–54 and 389–415 which omits the murder of Hippasos, see further Rosati 2024a ad loc., esp. pp. 356–357.

[171] Ov. *Met.* 389-415.

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These stories of grief and pride concern groups of women; when we turn to stories about the metamorphosis of individual women grief is still present, but also a number of further themes emerge. First, we revisit the origin stories of the halcyon, in which, again, grief is the focus; there are three different versions. In the first, Alkyone and Keyx are husband and wife whose pet names for each other, Zeus and Hera, respectively, attract the anger of the gods.[172] In another version, for which Probus cites Nicander, Keyx is drowned in a shipwreck and Alkyone throws herself off a cliff—either to reach her dead husband's corpse (as Ovid describes) or from despair.[173] Either Alkyone alone or Alkyone and Keyx are then turned into birds of the same name. The scholia to Aristophanes' *Birds* tries to combine the two stories, describing how Zeus' punishment for the pet names is to kill Keyx in a shipwreck. Because of the intensity of her mourning, Zeus pities Alkyone and changes her and her husband into a bird. That combination does not seem to be implausible.[174] Elsewhere, when the halcyon is introduced into texts as an image for an emotion, it tends to emphasize bereavement.[175]

Four stories of individual women becoming birds turn on the woman's relationship with her father. There are two cases of incest, Harpalyke and Nyktimene; in the case of Ktesilla, her father has promised her to a different lover and then broken his oath; while Skylla betrays her father and is transformed into the seabird Kiris. Working backwards, we start with Skylla. While some minor variations of her story exist, the central plot remains steadfast: most describe how Minos captures Megara through the treachery of Skylla, the daughter of its king, Nisos. The usual version of the betrayal involves Skylla cutting off Minos' lock of purple, magical hair. But Minos' response is not to thank her. In Ovid's account he is disgusted by Skylla and abandons her.[176] Ovid describes how she leaps after the ship of Minos and clings to it until her father (now transformed into a bird) divebombs her, causing her to let go; she becomes a bird instead of sinking. Ovid makes the aitiology of the bird-type explicit: she is Kiris from the shorn lock of

[172] Competition: Hes. FF11 and 12 (Most 2018b) and Apollod. *Bib.* 1.7.4.

[173] Ov. *Met.* 11.410–748 tells the story of the shipwreck and describes Alkyone's metamorphosis as she leaps to a mole to embrace Keyx's corpse, and the two are turned into birds (see further Reed 2024b ad loc., esp. pp. 497–499). Scholia ad Virg. *Ecl. et. Georg.* Bernensia (Philagrius) ad *Georg.* 1.399 (Hagen 1961) gives a version of this story that tells how the mourning Alkyone jumps off a cliff and is turned into a bird by Thetis. This also includes an alternative version in which Alkyon (male) is avenging/punishing his sister's incest by killing her with a sword and Thetis takes pity (*cum sororis suae incestum ulturus eam gladio perimere uellet*) and turns them both into birds. Probus' commentary ad Virg. *Georg.* 1.399 (Keil 1848) gives another version by Theodorus who refers to Alkyone daughter of Skiron. Told to find a husband by her father, she makes the mistake of sleeping with her suitors, is thrown into the sea by her father, and at that point is changed into a bird. (Forbes Irving 1990: 240, sees this as a pastiche, and notes that Skiron used to throw strangers down a cliff.)

[174] Schol. Ar. *Av.* 250; Forbes Irving (1990: 239) suggests that this looks too much like a contamination of the two versions.

[175] See Hom. *Il.* 9.562 and Eur. *IT* 1091–1092.

[176] Ov. *Met.* 8.6–151; see Kenney 2024 ad loc., esp. pp. 125–126 for the likely literary influences on Ovid's version.

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hair (that is, from *keirō*, 'I cut'). Although this sounds as if she was rescued, the author of the poem *Ornithiaka* ('History of Birds') explicitly notes that this is a punishment.[177]

That poem may have been written by one Dionysios of Philadelphia or by Dionysios Periegetes;[178] Eustathius reports the story in his commentary on Dionysios Periegetes' work, 'Description of the Known World', as part of the aitiology for the Saronic sea.[179] In this account, Skylla has cut off not just a lock of her father's hair, but his head. Minos realizes that her betrayal indicates that she is untrustworthy and so has her killed by dragging her behind a ship, tied to its rudder. It continues by recording that Parthenius (in his *Metamorphoses*) described how she was changed into a bird, 'while the gulf itself changed its spelling and received its new name from her being dragged.'[180] The equivalence of transformations appears to be deliberate. In these accounts and that by Callimachus,[181] Skylla is motivated by love. In an earlier version, told by the Chorus of Aeschylus' *Choephori*, she is driven by desire for a Cretan necklace of gold. This version is reminiscent of Eriphyle's betrayal of her husband Amphiaraos, where bribed by Polyneices with the necklace of Harmonia, Eriphyle persuades Amphiaraos to join the expedition of the Seven against Thebes—although she knows it will bring about his death.[182]

Turning to Ktesilla, Antoninus Liberalis presents her story as an *aition* of cult in Iulis on Keos, for Aphrodite *Ktesilla*, as she is called by the locals and Ktesilla *Hekaerge* as, he notes, she is called by others.[183] He attributes the story to Nicander, which may indicate that this is a local story. The first part of the tale tells how Ktesilla is tricked into promising to marry one Hermochares: he inscribes on an apple, the oath 'Yes, by Artemis, I will marry Hermochares the Athenian' and throws it into a sanctuary of Artemis; there, Ktesilla picks it up and reads it, presumably aloud.[184] She is angry that she has been tricked into taking the oath, but her father then promises (swearing by Apollo) that she can marry Hermochares—before he forgets and marries her to someone else. When he hears of her marriage, Hermochares rushes to the Artemision, where the ceremony is taking place. Antoninus Liberalis argues that Ktesilla falls in love with him, comes to an understanding with him, and with the help of her nurse, they sail away to Athens where they are married. But when she has a child, she dies; a result, we are told, of her father's broken oath. On the bier, a dove flies up and Ktesilla disappears. The oracle is consulted at this point and the cult of Aphrodite *Ktesilla*/Ktesilla *Hekaerge* is established. In this account, the dove provides a clear

[177] Dion. *Av.* 2.14. [178] Rusten 2012.
[179] Eust. ad Dion. Periegetes 420; see Lightfoot 2010, Parthenius F24(b).
[180] Trans. Lightfoot 2010. [181] Callim. *Hecale* F 90 (Hollis 1990).
[182] Aesch. *Choeph.* 613–622. [183] Ant. Lib. *Met.* 1.
[184] The story is, as many authors including Antoninus Liberalis have observed, reminiscent of the tale of Akontios and Kydippe, and indeed may be related, since in Callimachus' *Aitia* FF67–75e (Clayman 2022) Akontios is from Iulis and Kydippe from Naxos.

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link to Aphrodite; but the epithet *hekaerge* makes a link to Artemis, since Hekaerga is the name of a mythical Hyperborean attendant of Artemis, sister of Opis who brought gifts to Leto when she gave birth to Artemis and Apollo on Delos.[185] This is a theme that runs explicitly through the story as Antoninus Liberalis tells it.[186] Hekaerga also brings to mind the story of Aspalis who is active in the cult of Artemis and who acquires the epithet *Ameilete Hekaerge*.[187]

Finally, then, Nyktimene and Harpalyke, who are both listed by Hyginus among those 'quae contra fas concubuerunt'; that is, they commit incest (literally, 'they sleep together in a way that is not right').[188] In both stories the women become birds, specifically owls, that are dear to Athena. Nyktimene's story receives a number of different treatments that set her in different roles in the sequence of events. In Ovid's version, she is described by the Crow, whose own story is one of a near-rape (this time by Okeanos) when she was in human form, which she avoided through her transformation from a young woman into a bird dear to Athena. The Crow contrasts her experiences with those of Nyktimene, Athena's new favourite, describing, very briefly, how the girl defiled her father's bed.[189] In contrast, in Hyginus' account, Nyktimene is raped by her father Epopeus; the story is said to take place on Lesbos.[190]

Various stories about Harpalyke also exist, but these also seem to be about different Harpalykes. The Harpalyke in which we are interested first appears in a fragment of Euphorion's epic poem *Thrax*.[191] This seems to make reference to the

[185] Callim. *Hymn* 4.292 (where Opis is Oupis); cf. Hdt. 4.33–34 who calls them Arge and Opis. Apollodoros (*Bibl.* 1.4.5) reports that Orion was shot by Artemis for trying to attack Opis. Opis was a cult name of Artemis at Ephesus (Callim. *Hymn* 3.204).

[186] Baudy and Ambühl (2016) give Clem. Al. *Strom.* 5.8.48.4 and *EpGr* 460.6 as evidence for the epiclesis. It is noticeable that these references seem to be to cults in the east (see *I.Nordkarien* 484); but see Ar. *Thesm.* 972, where the chorus use 'Hekaerge' to invoke Artemis. Hekarerge's separate existence as a nymph may be indicated by a cult on Delos of Opis and Hekaerge (Pausanias 1.43.4 refers to hair offerings to these figures). It seems likely that Artemis Hekaerga and Artemis-Opis occur as a result of a conflation of a lesser divine presence with the stronger presence of the Olympian figure, facilitated by the connection with Delos, and with their shared associations with unmarried girls.

[187] See Aspalis' story in the case study Earth, p. 45.

[188] Hyg. *Fab.* 253. The others listed here are Iocasta, Pelopia, Hippodamia, Prokris (with Erechtheus, the result being Aglauros), and Menephron, who slept with Kyllene his daughter in Arkadia and with Blias his mother.

[189] Ov. *Met.* 2.590–595 (see Barchiesi 2024b ad Ov. *Met.* 2.589–595 for details of other versions and possible influences on Ovid). The story is told by the Crow as part of her narrative of warning to the Raven who is planning to report on Coronis to the god Apollo. This seduction is also found in schol. Stat. *Theb.* 3.507 (where the story is set in Ethiopia); a detail is added at the end that an alternative version describes her as the daughter of Proteus and that her transformation occurred because she feared the force of her father. See also *Myth Vat.* 2.39, in which Nyteus is seduced by his daughter Nyktaia.

[190] Hyg. *Fab.* 204. In the scholia to Virgil's *Georgics* (Hagen 1961), Nyktimene is given two stories: one that she is raped by her father, and another that she is frightened of her father after she is raped by Korymbos, who is a guest. As noted by Forbes Irving (1990: 254), neither Ovid's nor Hyginus' version is set in Athens, and neither story appears to have a specific link to cult activity relating to Athena.

[191] Euphorion F24 (Lightfoot 2010). The other Harpalyke is daughter of the Thracian king Harpalykos, who is referred to by Virg. *Aen.* (1.317). Hyg. *Fab.* 193 relates how she was brought up as

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story told in full by Parthenius, who sets the story in Argos.[192] The Euphorion fragment mentions the Aias river,[193] which is an alternative name for the Aous, a river of northern Epirus. Daughter of Epikaste and Klymenos, Harpalyke is sexually abused by her father. Even after he marries her off to Alastor the Neleid, he cannot give up his passion for her, and takes her back to live with him as his wife. In response, she kills and cuts up her younger brother and serves him up to her father at a public festival. In later versions, this is her son by her father.[194] In the version told by Hyginus, her father kills her; in the other versions she is turned into a Chalcis, a bird that is a 'handmaiden to Athena', and hated by the other birds. Parthenius gives the reader a vivid sense of her experience: *autē men euxamenē theois ex anthrōpōn apallagēnai*, 'she prayed to the gods to be removed from humankind'.[195]

The cannibalistic aspect of this story (and the resulting emotional response of Harpalyke) also features in one version of our next story.[196] In the category of family betrayal—and the terrible events that erupt from it—the story of Tereus, Prokne, and Philomela holds a distinctly devastating place. It offers a sequence of such horrors that the final metamorphoses of its protagonists might seem to be the only way to draw a line under events. This is the aetiological story of the nightingale (*aedon*), and an early, different but related, version of this, in which the bird is originally a woman called Aedon, appears in the *Odyssey*. The story is told by Penelope, who relates how the nightingale mourns her son Itylos without ceasing because she had killed him 'through folly'.[197] In the scholiast, this acquires a more complex backstory (attributed to Pherekeydes):[198] Aedon, daughter of Pandareos had two sons (Itylos and Neis) and was jealous of her sister-in-law, Niobe's, six children. She therefore plans to kill one of them, but instead kills her own son, Itylos. Pherekydes tells us that Zeus stirs up *Poine* (that is, literally 'Punishment') against her, but she prays to become a bird instead—and Zeus makes her a nightingale, in which form, she sings a song of mourning.

The alternative, and perhaps better-known version of this story, focuses on Prokne and Philomela, the daughters of one Pandion, ruler of the Athenians. The sequence of events is well known: betrayal, rape, violence, and cannibalism follow in short order. Recent work on the fragments of the play *Tereus* by Sophocles has shown how his version of the story placed emphasis on the idea of

a warrior (nourished by the milk of cows and horses) by her father, after her mother's death. She saves her father in battle against Neoptolemos; in Serv. ad *Aen*. 1.317 it is from capture by the Getae.

[192] Parthen. *Amat. Narr*. 13; cf. Hyg. *Fab*. 206, 242 who sets the story in Arkadia.
[193] Euphorion F24.10 (Lightfoot 2010).
[194] Lact. Placidus ad Stat. *Theb*. 5,120; Hyg. *Fab*. 206, 238, 239, 255.
[195] Parthen. *Amat. Narr*. 13, trans. Lightfoot 2010.
[196] Hyg. *Fab*. 246 lists children eaten at feasts.
[197] Hom. *Od*. 19.518–519; 'through folly', *di' aphradias*, l. 523.
[198] Pherekydes *FGrH* 3 F124.

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sisterhood—seeing it as outweighing the bond of wife and husband and mother and son, and portraying 'a relationship between two sisters more remarkable than any other we know of from the Greek tragic stage.'[199] Evidence suggests that earlier writers knew versions of the story that made it the origin story of the *chelidon* or 'swallow', but it seems likely they did not include the family relationships that Sophocles created.[200]

It is Sophocles' version that seems to have dominated subsequent accounts, so Aedon becomes Prokne, and Chelidon, Philomela. We are fortunate in having what is likely to be a hypothesis of the play dating to the second or third century CE.[201] This relates how Pandion, ruler of the Athenians, marries his elder daughter Prokne to Tereus, king of the Thracians; the couple have a son, Itys. At Prokne's request, Tereus goes to Athens to fetch her sister: on the journey home he rapes her, cutting out her tongue so that she cannot reveal what has happened. From the hypothesis it is not clear what happens to her then: it is usually assumed that Tereus returns home and says that she has died; she is meanwhile living in the wilderness. (Ovid implies that she is imprisoned in a guarded building; Apollodoros that she is imprisoned on Tereus' estate; Hyginus that Tereus gives her to a neighbouring king as a slave.[202])

This setting of the story, as told by Sophocles, provides a straightforward contrast between the civilized location of Athens and the uncivilized location of Thrace, which is embodied in both Tereus and Philomela as they move between these locations. Thus, Tereus may conceal his character beneath a veneer of

[199] Coo 2013: 349.

[200] Zacharia (2001: 110) draws attention to the theme of sisterhood in Sophocles' plays and suggests that the relationship between Prokne and Philomela 'conformed to an established Sophoclean pattern of sisterly closeness'; cf. Coo (2013: 351) who emphasizes how this sisterly bond was 'unlike that in any other known tragedy'. Aelian *VH* 12.20 notes that Hes. F312 describes the wakefulness of the nightingale and swallow, and Aelian ascribes it to their 'unlawful banquet'. Hesiod (*Op*. 568) refers to the swallow as the daughter of Pandion with no mention of the nightingale, as does Sappho F135, with no mention of the nightingale; but in both cases she is a daughter of Pandion, suggesting the family connection. Aeschylus (*Ag*. 1140–1145) mentions the mourning nightingale, without mentioning the swallow, and the swallow wife of Tereus (*Supp*. 58–67) without mentioning the nightingale. In terms of artistic representations of the myth, there is a seventh century BCE metope from the temple of Apollo at Thermon, Aitolia (Athens, National Archaeological Museum AD 2), which shows two women with a boy between them. The women are named as Chelidon (on the right) and Aedon (on the left). This would go some way to ameliorating the problem that Johnston (2018: 188) raises when she argues that, in Hesiod's and Sappho's accounts, the story loses its logical connection between a bird with a mournful cry (the nightingale) and a mother who kills her child: these early poets focus on Chelidon, daughter of Pandion, and so the main character must have been turned into a swallow, not a nightingale. But this is to assume that the poets did not know the whole narrative. Alternatively, perhaps they did—and were selecting from it for their own purposes: e.g., Hesiod in the *Op*. is talking about the swallow in an agricultural context, while Sappho is describing the early-morning twittering of swallows; in neither instance is a reference to the whole story necessary.

[201] *P.Oxy*. 3013, discussed by Coo 2013: 352. This study follows Coo in assuming that this hypothesis provides the summary of the play, rather than looking to reconstruction from other sources, in particular since it includes details that are found in fragments of the play itself (the Thracian setting and the weaving, FF582 and 595, respectively; cf. Coo 2013: 353).

[202] Ov. *Met*. 6.571–574, Apollod. *Bib*. 3.14.8; Hyg. *Fab*. 45 (n.b., *Prokne* is *Progne* is this version).

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civilized behaviour, but he is fundamentally wild; his trip to Athens is like an animal foraging for food. Philomela is his prey, taken from the security of her father's house and dragged into the wild. She is fundamentally civilized, and, in Ovid's version, she maintains the activity of weaving even while abandoned in the wilderness by her rapist. Indeed, unable to speak, Philomela weaves her story, sending the horrifying images to her sister. Prokne becomes frantic (the hypothesis uses the word 'jealousy'; Ovid describes her silent distress). In Ovid's version, she takes the opportunity of a Bacchic ritual visit to the mountains to rescue her sister.[203] Together, they kill Prokne's son, Itys; she cooks him, and serves him to her husband. The sisters then flee.

The corporeal metamorphoses occur at this point: the sisters are turned into a nightingale (Prokne) and a swallow (Philomela), while Tereus is turned into a hoopoe. We lack sufficient material from the Sophoclean version to know if he attributed a motive to Zeus for this transformation—although a scholiast on Hesiod's *Works and Days*, in his summary of the play, suggests that it was pity for the women;[204] Ovid only describes the changes without mentioning the gods.[205] Apollodoros says that the characters themselves pray to the gods to be turned into birds.[206] But Antoninus Liberalis suggests that these changes occur because Zeus feels pity—and also wants to prevent any greater evil being committed.[207]

Certainly, the emotions attributed to these figures in the other versions make that eventuality seem likely: Ovid, for example, describes Philomela and Prokne in cruel exultation, and Tereus as grief-stricken and fired-up for revenge.[208] There is, perhaps, a very specific symbolism in the choice of a hoopoe for the metamorphosis of Tereus. Aristotle, in discussing birds that change their form, quotes a passage of tragedy, which he attributes to Aeschylus, in which the hoopoe is described as beginning his life cycle with the white plumage of a hawk, which then becomes the more familiar dappled plumage, and this is coupled with a preference for remote locations (deserted woods and mountains). This is attributed to the bird's own consciousness of his crimes committed as Tereus.[209] This double bird form has particular resonance for the story: a hawk is a bird of prey that pursues swallows and nightingales;[210] the hoopoe, according to Pliny, is a bird that lives in its own filth.[211]

[203] Ov. *Met.* 6.576–80 (weaving), 6.581–86 (distress) 587–91 (Bacchic ritual).
[204] Tzetz. ad Hes. *Op.* 566. (*TrGF* 4, p. 435).
[205] Ov. *Met.* 6.667–670.
[206] Apollod. *Bib.* 3.14.8.
[207] Ant. Lib. *Met.* 11. Lib. *Progymnasmata* 2.19 (Gibson 2008) states it is out of pity for the eaten child. Illustrating how these stories develop, a much later account of the story in a scholion on Soph. *El.* 147–149, in the Moschopulean manuscript Vindobonensis, Philologicus Graecus 161, copied by Konstantinos Ketzas in 1412, related how the two women prayed to be saved from Tereus; see Cuomo 2022: 185–186.
[208] Ov. *Met.* 6.668–674.
[209] Arist. *Hist. an.* 9. 633 A; the quotation he uses is now attributed to Soph. F581.
[210] Conon 31 relates how hoopoes always chase these birds.
[211] Pliny *HN* 10.86.

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Later writers will introduce some variations, including location,[212] while the Roman poets seem to have reversed the transformations of Prokne and Philomela,[213] but this remains the canonical version. Even the very different version told by Antoninus Liberalis (in which the main characters are called Polytechnus and Aedon, a carpenter and weaver, who are punished by Hera for claiming to love each other more than Hera and Zeus) maintains the key narrative thread of the rape of a sister, the killing and cannibalism of a son.[214]

These stories of transformations into birds depict men and women in the most extreme of emotions, lifted out of human society. Alongside the theme of death, Forbes Irving has stressed how many of these stories portray the breakdown of family order and has highlighted the theme of 'a movement from the house to the wilds';[215] in this context, he draws particular attention to the stories of Philomela and Prokne and the story of Harpalyke to draw attention to the themes of 'eating and sex, and more particularly, between eating one's own family and incest.'[216] These are certainly significant aspects of these particular stories, and further support the theory that metamorphosis is prompted by, and a solution for, the need to deal with those who have committed dreadful crimes and are polluted by their actions, who pose a source of risk for their communities, and so must be removed from human association.

But we can also see these stories of transformation in terms of the intense and unbearable emotions that they depict. When we set them alongside the other stories in this category, we see a kaleidoscope of relational pain that seems to catalyse these metamorphoses. Grief is the primary emotion, but we also see men and women transformed by pride (the betrayal of the divine by Minyades and Ktesilla); excessive and misplaced desire (Skylla, Nyktimene in one version, Tereus); and the trauma of fear and anger provoked by sexual assault (Nyktimene in another version, Harpalyke, Prokne, and Philomela). In most of these cases, family relations have fallen apart, and these stories reveal the home as a place

[212] Thrace: Ov. *Met.* 6.424 with Rosati 2024c ad loc. and pp. 675–676 on the significance of Tereus' Thracian origin. The sisters flee to Daulis: Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.14.8. Thracians in Daulis: Thuc. 2.29 and Daulis in Pausanias 1.5.4. According to Ant. Lib. *Met.* 11, Boios set the story in Attica, and creates a complex story involving multiple familiar themes of competition with the gods, rape, family murder. In Helladios' version (*ap.* Phot. *Bibl.* 531), Pandareos is king of Doulichion, while her husband is Zetes, son of Boreas; Aedon kills her son Aetylus because she thinks he is abetting her husband in an affair with a hamadryad.

[213] See Serv. *ad* Virg. *Ecl.* 78; Hyg. *Fab* 45, *Myth. Vat.*1.4 and 2.17; Ovid *Met.* 6.668–670 does not identify the two sisters in their transformation. As Forbes Irving (1990: 249) observes, this misses the *aition* for the twittering of the swallow as arising from the mutilation of Philomela. As Monella (2005: 221–252) states, the nightingale becomes a metaphor for the elegiac poet, which becomes established as a *topos* in Latin literature.

[214] Polytechnus gives Aedon her sister as a slave (she does not recognize her with her hair cut short and in different clothes) and does not cut out her tongue; Aedon's father punishes Polytechnus by smearing him with honey and leaving him in a sheepfold to the flies; Aedon herself takes pity on Polytechnus and is killed by her own family. Polytechnus becomes a woodpecker, Aedon's brother a hoopoe, Aedon a nightingale, and Chelidon a swallow.

[215] Forbes Irving 1990: 102.

[216] Forbes Irving 1990: 103.

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without safety, and relationships between men and women as fraught with risks. Those who experience these emotions are unable to continue in normal society—and in these stories, they are removed—transformed into birds, ungrounded and yet unable to escape their pain.

Conclusion: 'Flag' or 'Faint'

These stories of men and women snatched or jumping into air, or becoming birds, offer a potent insight into the ancient perception of the interconnections of body and landscape—in which landscape encompasses not only earth and object, but the heavens above and the space around us. If we think of these stories as reflecting the ancient conception of the structure of air, then we can see each section as, perhaps, relating to a different part of air within this framework. Those stories described in 'Taken' evoke the higher part of air, the realm of *aither*. These tales of perilous air, and air-borne perils, vividly communicate the emotional and physical shock of sudden assault and the threat of death in an environment that seems to crackle with earthly menace and divine force. Stories of men and women whom the gods snatched and/or set among the stars lay bare the power dynamic between god and mortal, with katasterisms offering, perhaps, the most extreme version of 'removal'. There is a gendered division apparent: heroes are rewarded, and women rescued from their suffering; but, as we might expect, their motifs are far from so persistently simple. A number of different mythemes—including punishment, protection, preservation—emerge from these aitiological accounts. Some of the stories allow us to glimpse the events, the transgressions, that have prompted these katasterisms. Some are very brief, such as the punishment of Kalliope for the pride of her mother; but the more elaborately told tale of Kallisto draws attention to the complex lives of mythical women and the precarious nature of the human condition. These tales destabilise our certainty: are these stories of being taken by the gods stories of suffering or of salvation? And Euripides' depictions of the snatching and transformation of Iphigeneia also raises questions about our judgement of the 'moment' of metamorphosis—when and how does the change begin?

The paradigm of a mortal entering the supernatural realm is even more fully realized in the stories found in 'Falling', which also interact with the narrative pattern of sacrifice. Here, perhaps, we have moved from *aither* to the heavier realm of *aer*, in stories about mortals who launch themselves into the air—and are destroyed by falling; no salutary snatch rescues them. It is mostly female figures, groups of sisters, who die in this way, leaping from somewhere high in the city that they are meant to save—before they are ontologically transformed, and then instantiated in an imbricated physical and supernatural landscape. We hear

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little of these figures' individual experience—the narrative of sacrifice is a powerful mytheme that seems to require the sacrifice of individuality itself; nevertheless, the story of the Erechtheidai, whose story is saturated with fear, offers a vivid sense of the protagonists' experience.

Male figures leap too and sacrifice themselves to save a city—although there are fewer of them, and they act as individuals rather than in groups: Menoikeus jumps to save a city; others jump from grief. Men also participate in another air-related type of death—thrown from cliffs in stories about envy. In these cases, there are fewer bodily metamorphoses, but the significance of the spilling of blood, and how it changes, found in stories in the case study, Earth, also appears here, in a later version of Menoikeus' death. Finally, we turn to narratives of bird metamorphoses, which carry us into more detailed, and more emotionally turbulent narratives—many of them told by later authors. These stories focus largely on the experience of intense grief, but also relate a number of other intensely emotional, broken relationships; in particular, heinous crimes and terrifying desires.

Across all of these stories, the details of the events that take place and the emotions the protagonists feel and respond to, support the possibility that *miasma*/pollution, and its avoidance may be a key explanatory theme. As in the stories of metamorphoses in the case study on Earth, we see, again, divinely imposed isolation from human company, which can be viewed as both a penalty and a salvation. But there are differences: here, in many of the stories, mortals are completely removed, taken to another space—be it death, Hades, or the heavens. The startling stories of mortals becoming gods, especially in 'Falling', in which the act of jumping becomes a form of promise, suggest a consecration of the individual to the divine—a kind of *agos*. In these stories, the changes the protagonists undergo, from one ontological state to another, enacts the stunning experience of being 'taken'. In contrast, those who become birds are far from rooted, but still earthbound; securely removed from human society, they are, in many ways, trapped in particular habits and habitats that recall the circumstances of their pain.

And this last point brings us to the ways in which these ancient stories of extreme emotions may also evoke intuitive, embodied recognition in their audiences—even now. If we look to modern paradigms of human responses to extreme events, then we can see a number of ways in which these stories of embodied changes relating to air, of flight and enforced distance from the mundane world might find resonance with our own experiences and with what we now know about the body's responses to extreme emotional events.

These resonances occur in a number of different dimensions. To begin with, these mythic stories evoke physical experiences that may be familiar: the stories in 'Taken' bring to mind the sudden shock of trauma or a strong emotion, which, in its intensity, may take our breath away, may seem to 'snatch' us out of normal

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life.[217] The stories in 'Falling' bring to mind the dizziness and sense of vertigo that can accompany extreme fear.[218] There are also signs of the trauma response of dissociation, described already in the case study Earth, in which an individual may suddenly experience themselves as 'detached' or 'removed' from their surroundings ('derealization'); or may experience seeing themselves as if from outside their own body ('depersonalization').[219] In both these sets of stories, individuals become distanced from their mortal lives: they are whisked away to live with the gods, or to become stars, or they fall and/or are sacrificed, dying or taken from death to become goddesses. The details of these stories may suggest the experience of flag or faint responses to trauma, in which an individual becomes flaccidly immobile and unable to support themselves upright, before, in the next stage, completely passing out.

In the stories of those who change into birds, something of this dissociation is also evoked, as the gods change men and women suddenly into birds, removing them from their day-to-day experience. Here, the trauma response of 'flight' may also seem to be relevant, in which the body, in a threatening situation, is aroused to try to escape. But there is no clean getaway here: even as these individuals take to the air, they cannot escape from their experiences. Indeed, in a number of these stories of people changing into birds, there is an explicit comparison with the contexts and behaviours of their mortal existence. Again, the experience of dissociation seems an apt parallel for these stories, in which an individual experiences a sense of alienation from the familiar world.

As discussed at the end of the case study, Earth, these kinds of responses to trauma can be seen as ways in which the body seeks to protect itself—and some of the stories in this case study also emphasize how these corporeal changes are for the safety or rescue of the person involved.[220] But, I would suggest, while the metamorphoses of the stories in Earth seem to underline a sense of survival and endurance, many of the stories of Air-related changes and the circumstances that have led to them are more insidious, highlighting situations of horror in which the characters feel extreme grief and/or terror. The protagonists of these stories are removed, taken or jumping from the situations that hurt them; but, although they cannot rejoin the mortal world, nevertheless, they cannot escape the events that took place there. If we continue the parallel with modern responses to trauma, then these stories of Air can be read as drawing attention to the ways in which the body, interacting with the surrounding landscape, retains and replays experiences of traumatic experiences and extreme emotions.

[217] Six stages of trauma reaction, see Schauer and Elbert 2010 (also briefly described in Schwartz 2021: 36); further discussion in the Introduction to this volume.
[218] Schauer and Elbert 2010: 120.
[219] See the description of trauma-induced dissociation in Schauer and Elbert 2010: 113.
[220] See case study Earth, p. 55.

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Appendix: Excluded Stories

Here I offer an overview of the transformations into birds that I have not discussed in this case study. They include a number of later stories of bird metamorphoses, among them, those that seem likely to be the creation of Boios, the Hellenistic author of the *Ornithogonia*, which gave aitiological stories for different birds; the work is now lost but was used as a source by later writers, including Antoninus Liberalis and Ovid. The stories include those of Aigypios (Neophron, Timandra, and Boulis); Alkathous; Anthos; Arne; Askalaphos; Botres; the Emathides; Erinona; the children of Eumelos (Meropis, Byssa, and Agron); Hierax; the Iunx; Kleinis (Harpe, Harpasos, Lykios, Artemiche, and Ortygios); Kyknos; Mounichos; the *Oinotrop(h)oi* (Oino, Spermo, and Elais); Periphas; and Polyphonte.

Some of these stories are extremely dramatic, including a number of familiar story patterns clustered together to create an implausibly complex narrative. The story of Aigypios, set in the furthest reaches of Thessaly, is one of revenge incest, in which Aigypios bribes and seduces Timandra, mother of Neophron, who in turn tricks him into sleeping with his own mother Boulis.[221] When she recognizes her sleeping son and tries to blind him (which is possibly an ironic reference to, and distortion of, the Oedipus story),[222] Apollo wakes him up and he prays that they all disappear—and Zeus turns them into a set of birds that are never seen together: vultures in the case of Aigypios and Neophron; Timandra an *aigithallos*, and Boulis a *pōunx*, a bird that eats only eyes. Another very complex tale is that of Polyphonte's transformation into an owl; this includes a number of shocking items that appear to be borrowed from other myths, including bestiality, the birth of monstrous children, and even the location (Thrace).[223]

Staying with the shocking: a couple of stories include humans eaten by animals. First, there is the story of Anthos, in which a family is eaten by the horses that they have allowed to graze on the weeds of their overgrown and neglected land.[224] The story is told by Antoninus Liberalis, citing Boios, but also, it has been suggested, the plot of a play by Agathon (the *Anthos* or *Antheus*, in which, Aristotle noted, every character was invented).[225] The story of Kleinis, set in the exotic land of Mesopotamia, is very similar, but further detail makes it slightly more comprehensible: this time the carnivorous animals are donkeys, which the pious Kleinis wants to sacrifice to Apollo. Although the god tells him to desist, his

[221] Ant. Lib. *Met.* 5, citing Boios. Forbes Irving (1990: 223) describes this as looking like 'one of those stories in which Boios has taken familiar motifs from the heroic myths and given them a bourgeois context.'

[222] See Devereux 1973 on blinding as appropriate to male sexual transgression, since the eyes may represent the male sexual organs, and blinding may represent castration.

[223] Ant. Lib. *Met.* 21, citing Boios; see Forbes Irving 1990: 254–255.

[224] See Celoria 1992 ad Ant. Lib. *Met.* 7 on the difficulties with this particular story and its origins.

[225] Ant. Lib. *Met.* 7; Arist. *Poet.* 9.1451b 21= *TrGF* 39 Agathon F2a; but, as Sourvinou-Inwood (2003: 18) has emphasized, these made-up characters were 'made-up mythological characters'.

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family persuade him to continue—the result being the equine assault. Various gods step in to save different members of the family, with a number of birds resulting. Harpe, Kleinis' wife, becomes a lammergeyer, and Harpasos a bird of the same name; both transformations are the gifts of Poseidon. Kleinis becomes an eagle, Lykios a raven, Artemiche a piphinx. Ortygios is turned into a tit-mouse, transformed by Apollo (after the intervention of Leto and Artemis who decide that Kleinis, Artemiche, and Ortygios are innocent). The story appears to be contrived to fit the animals concerned: Antoninus Liberalis cites Boios and the *Apollo* of Simias of Rhodes; of the latter there is one fragment that has survived, in which the speaker appears to describe a journey to the Hyperboreans.[226]

This introduces the theme of misplaced piety, which is also found in the story of Botres, set in Thebes, which provides the aitiology for the bee-eater.[227] The story concerns a boy beaten into a fit by his father for consuming the brain of a sacrificed animal before it had been offered at the altar; Apollo takes pity on the child, who had revered him, and turns him into the bird. There may be some influence from the story of Tydeus, who eats the brains of his enemy; but this is not an account of cannibalism. Rather it concerns the excessive and misplaced piety of the father, sharing similarities with the story of Alkathous who kills his son Kallipolis because, in his distress (he has come to report the death of his brother), he scatters the wood for the altar's log fire.[228] The description of the bee-eater bird as bringing forth its young underground gives a sense of this bird as trying to protect its young, but the imagery is even stronger: this bird was said to take care of its parents as soon as it was able[229]—an idea that carries deeper pathos in a story where a child has been killed by its parent.

Piety and impiety are the key themes of a number of further stories. First, there are those who are straightforwardly rewarded for their piety. In the tale of Mounichos, a king of the Molossians, bandits attack him and his children, and set fire to the house in which they have taken shelter. Because of their piety, Zeus rescues them by turning them into birds.[230] But piety can also lead to punishment, as in the story of King Periphas of Athens.[231] Zeus punishes Periphas because he is so pious that men start to call him Zeus *Soter*, *Epopsios*, and *Meilichios* ('Saviour, Overseer and Gracious') and grant him honours. Apollo persuades Zeus not to destroy him with a thunderbolt, but rather to turn him into a bird—appropriately an eagle. This appears to be an aitiological bird story: the eagle is the special attendant of Zeus, guarding Zeus' sceptre, and allowed to approach his throne.

[226] Ant. Lib. *Met.* 20; Simias of Rhodes, an Alexandrian poet *c.* 300 BCE, was thought to have invented *technopaignia*. For discussion of Simias and the fragments see Kwapisz 2018.
[227] Ant. Lib. *Met.* 18, citing Boios; but with the briefest reference in Ov. *Met.* 7.390. It is not clear why Forbes Irving (1990: 226) considers the child referred here to be a girl.
[228] Alkathous: Paus. 1.4.6. [229] Arist. *HA* 9.615b25.
[230] Ant. Lib. *Met.* 14; Ov. *Met.* 13.717–718. [231] Ov. *Met.* 7.399–401.

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In some cases, piety can be unbalanced, as in the story of the children of Eumelos of Kos, three daughters who will not pay the gods their due. Meropis, Byssa, and Agron worship the Earth—leading to a productive and fruitful land, but bad relations with the other gods. Like the story of the Minyades, there is a note of incivility here—these three do not mix with other men or join in communal festivals. The brother of the three turns down invitations to events held in honour of Athena, Artemis, and Hermes, paying specific insults to these gods, who, eventually, decide to visit the three mortals. Antoninus Liberalis takes particular trouble to note how the gods themselves have come transformed—the goddesses as girls and Hermes in a shepherd's smock. Meropis, Byssa, and Agron pour scorn on their suggestions that they worship the gods, who then each pick a victim to turn into a bird. Meropis is particularly rude about Athena and is turned into an owl. Byssa retains her name, as a bird called a Horned Owl (the bird of Leukothea). Agron is changed into a stone-curlew, and Eumelos, their father, who abuses Hermes for transforming his son, is changed into a night raven, which Antoninus Liberalis describes as 'an omen of evil'.[232] Pride leads to impiety for another group of young women in the story of the Emathides, who compete with the muses, and are turned into nine different birds; this is likely to be a Hellenistic invention.[233]

Kindness leads to impiety in the story of Hierax. Events take place, we are told, in the land of the Mariandyni (a tribe of Bithynia in northern Asia Minor, by the coast of the Black Sea). The Trojans have failed to sacrifice to Poseidon correctly and are being punished with famine and a sea monster; Hierax takes pity on them and feeds them. Poseidon, in turn, punishes him not only by turning him into a bird, but by transforming his ethos so that he is a bird who kills other birds and is hated by them.[234]

There are also stories of sexual violence and betrayal: the tale of Erinona, beloved of Zeus and raped by Adonis, is told only by Servius.[235] Zeus kills Adonis with a thunderbolt and Erinona is turned into a peacock, before they are both restored and resume married life, including the birth of a son, Taleus. The story of Arne is very briefly indicated (and only) by Ovid. It seems to be a story of betrayal, similar to one of the variants told about Skylla/Kiris; Arne is called 'impious' and her transformation into a jackdaw picks up on her human greed for gold.[236]

[232] These are Pollard's (1977: 169) translations of the bird-names; Celoria translates them as 'plover' and 'long-eared owl', respectively.

[233] Ov. *Met.* 5.294–678 who uses this story as a frame for others (see Rosati 2024b ad loc., esp. pp. 528–533); Ant. Lib. *Met.* 17, probably drawing on Nicander.

[234] The story, told by Ant. Lib. *Met.* 3 and citing Boios, seems to borrow a number of motifs from elsewhere.

[235] Serv. ad Virg. *Ecl.* 10.18.

[236] Ov. *Met.* 7.465–468.

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Betrayal is also key to the story of Askalaphos, who is reported by Ovid and later sources to have been turned into an owl for betraying Persephone by revealing that she had eaten a pomegranate seed while in Hades.[237] Apollodoros gives this metamorphosis in his second version, but in his first account, Askalaphos is only buried by Demeter under an enormous stone, a version also found in Euphorion.[238] the man who revealed that Persephone had eaten the pomegranate seed—requiring her to stay in Hades—is himself physically forced to stay there. This suggests that this may be the older version. If so, then it seems to reprise a story pattern that we have seen in the case study on Earth, in which betrayal of a god is punished with an earth-related punishment, and the transformation into a bird is a later addition.

There are some further, late stories of heroic figures being transformed, including Kyknos son of Poseidon, who is transformed only in the version given by Ovid, although he was apparently described as having been raised by swans in earlier accounts.[239] Similarly, Kyknos, son of Ares, who fought, and was defeated by, Herakles, is transformed into a bird in Boios' version.[240] The closest story relating to female figures concerns the *Oinotrop(h)oi* who are turned into birds when they are forced to feed the Greek army at Troy. Oino ('Wine'), Spermo ('Seed/Corn'), and Elais, ('Olive-tree') are daughters of King Anios of Delos. In the version given by Ovid and Servius, they escape, but are captured by the Greeks, and then rescued by Dionysos who turns them into doves.[241] While earlier sources do tell a variety of stories about the three women's role at Troy, these metamorphic elements only appear relatively late, in Ovid, although Lykophron may have known about this story.[242] Finally, among bird metamorphoses, I exclude a

[237] Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.5.12.; Ov. *Met.* 5.533–550 (see discussion by Rosati 2024b ad loc., esp. p. 577); Servius ad Virg. *Georg* 1.39 (does not mention the punishment only the betrayal); Lactantius Placidus, on Stat. *Theb.* 3.511 (no stone, only the owl); *Myth. Vat.* 2.100 states that he was turned into an owl.

[238] Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.5.3 describes the stone, 2.5.12 the transformation into an owl; Euphorion F11 (Lightfoot 2010).

[239] Ov. *Met.* 12.143–145; cf. Procl. *Chrest.* 80 (*Bernabé, PEG*, p. 42) and Hes. F178 Most (2018b); Hegesianax of Alexandria (author of a work entitled *Cephalion's History of Troy*, see *FGrH* 45 F1). On the misadventures of Kyknos' children Hemithea and Tennes, see pp. 165–166.

[240] See Stesich. F207 (Campbell 1991) (= schol. A Pind. *Ol.*10.19 and schol. *Il.* 23.346). He becomes a swan in Athen. 393e, although there is a possibility that this is a confusion with the Kyknos, who is the son of Poseidon, whom Athenaeus has just mentioned, see Forbes Irving 1990: 237.

[241] Ov. *Met.* 13.643–674 (see Hardie 2024 ad loc. on other versions of Aeneas' stay on Delos) and Serv. ad Virg. *Aen.* 3.80. Ovid states that these were doves of Venus; Servius, that Anios consecrated his daughters to Dionysos and forbade the killing of doves on Delos. Some sources (e.g., Lyk. *Alex.* 580) call the daughters the *Oinotropoi* ('Wine-turners'), others (e.g., Apollod. *Epit.* 3.10) the *Oinotrophoi* ('Wine-growers').

[242] Lykophron (*Alex.* 569–585, at 580) refers to the women as *phabas* ('doves'), see Hornblower 2015: 250; if it is a metaphor, as Forbes Irving (1990: 234), it is surprisingly apt. Euphorion wrote a play called *Anios*, but no more is known about it than its title. According to Tzetzes, Callimachus also told the story of the daughters in his *Aitia*, but no further details are given (F188a Clayman 2022; cf. Hollis 2007: 286). The scholiast on Lykophron (*Alex.* 570) says that Pherekydes (*FGrH* 3 F140, Morison 2011) described how Anios persuaded the Greeks 'when they arrived at his island to remain there for nine years and in the tenth year Ilion would be sacked as a gift of the gods. And he promised

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'magical' story: that of the *Iunx,* which I exclude because it is an aitiology of magic rather than of landscape: the daughter of Echo or Peitho, Iunx bewitches Zeus into sleeping with Io, and Hera, unsurprisingly, is upset. She turns the Iunx into a bird and makes her 'a collaborator with witches' (*sunergein tais pharmakeiais*).[243]

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them that they would be fed by his daughters'. The scholiast also notes that the story is told in the *Kypria* (F26 West 2003a), but no further details are provided of metamorphosis.

[243] Callim. F685 (Clayman 2022). There is much scholarship on the magical elements here, and their reception in Greek literature; see Faraone 1999, esp. 55–69.

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3
Fire

Introduction: Revelation

This third case study differs from the first two insofar as the mythic examples are both different in frequency and in kind.[1] *Nevertheless, as the stories in this section indicate, myth creates a distinctive role for fire's transformative power for mortals.*

In Greco-Roman myth, mortal men and women do not 'become' fire—at least not in the sense of a metamorphosis—instead, they are afflicted by it and it wreaks change, destroying the mortal body, but still with room for transformation.[2] As this case study will show, these changes occur within the system of cosmic reciprocity that we have been tracing in which mortals feature as both subjects and objects, experiencing what it means to be objects *of* risk and objects *at* risk. This is the case also with the one immortal figure who does consistently achieve a visible metamorphosis into fire and out again, the nymph/goddess Thetis, who is herself caught within this cosmic system.[3]

Fire is an active, indeed, a divinely indexed, agent in this system: unlike the metamorphoses of the previous two case studies, in which individuals become, in some way, a constant part of the element in question, in this case study, individuals are transformed by being consumed. Fire both destroys and creates, not only the individuals within these narratives, but also, more broadly, the societies and their landscapes, in which these narratives appear. The key dynamic of these stories of change is revelation, which emerges in a number of different ways. In some of these stories it shows up in the disclosure of divine power or presence, which has been hidden. In others, it is the discovery of activities that have been concealed from view, or the playing out and exposure of deception. The culminating revelation may, for some, mean an experience simply of annihilation; but for others, it may lead to an experience of transfiguration. A crucial difference in these stories,

[1] Furley (1981: 115) examines the role of fire in ancient Greek religion more broadly.

[2] I agree here with Lyons (1997: 68) that transformation as a narrative motif can be interchangeable with motifs of death/apotheosis; Forbes Irving (1990: 195–196) thinks not.

[3] On Thetis' metamorphoses, see below pp. 116 and 139–40. In contrast, other shape-shifters do not become fire: Proteus when he appears in Homer's *Odyssey* (4.454–459), does not turn into fire, although Eidothea, his daughter, warns Menelaos that he may (4.418); he becomes a bearded lion, a snake, a panther, a mighty boar, running water, and a tall leafy tree (and see further on Proteus in the case studies, Earth, p. 32 n. 15 and 59 n. 158, and Water, p. 146). In Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (8.740), the River Acheloos includes fire as one of the transformations he can achieve.

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from those we have explored in the previous two case studies, is the relational nature of the experiences they describe: these stories draw attention to the effects of emotions not only on ourselves, but also on others.

As we will see, there are gendered differences in these narratives, with regard to the vulnerabilities and qualities attributed to the men and women at the centre of these stories, as they engage with each other and with the gods. In particular, I suggest that there is a specific, implicit relationship between the roles of women and of fire that emerges from some of these stories, and, illustrating this, the case study is bookended by reflections on Pandora and Thetis. Thus, the case study starts with the myth of Pandora, the original woman, created by Zeus for man as a penalty for the theft of fire by Prometheus. This story sees the concept of woman instrumentalized in the cosmological struggle to establish ontological categories—animal, god, mortal (and, for the Greeks, male and female). These themes are repeated across the stories that follow in this case study, in which we see a motif of duplicitous exchange, in which a relational transgression—between men or man and woman, or divinity and mortal—leads to the concealing and/or revealing of fire, which, in turn, culminates in a moment of transformation or death.

This theme of secrecy and revelation continues in the second section, 'Deceived', which examines the myths of Meleager, Achilles, and Demophon, victims of the divine manipulation of fire, for whom the revelation of a secret becomes the cause of their deaths. Fire underlines these dynamics: across this case study, the role of fire, when it is disclosed, instigates a transformation (albeit partial) or a death. In two of these three stories, those of Achilles and Demophon, it is the revelation and then removal of fire, that seeds a crucial vulnerability; in the case of Meleager, it is the revelation of fire, and its use. And we cannot ignore the maternal relationship that underlies these tales: in each case, it is a female figure, in the position of a caregiver, that brings the force of this fire to bear.

The third section, 'Destroyed', comprises stories of fire obliterating mortals. In the first example, that of Semele, the burning of her body leads to her death, and the birth of a god. In the next two examples, fire instigates a further process of transformation. Asklepios and Herakles are each apotheosized after their mortal bodies burn. Their transformations from mortal to divinity, and the ambiguous status that they then each occupy, signal both the fluidity, and the limits, of the ontological interactions between human and surrounding landscape that we have been exploring. These stories suggest the necessity of the total destruction of mortal matter before a transformation to divinity can occur.

And this is also a key theme of the second set of examples in this section: the rituals of the Korinthian Hellotia and Boiotian Daidala, and their accompanying myths. Recalling the story of Pandora, these myths also feature fire and women, dolls and deception. The first set of myths, about the Hellotia, lead us from destruction to transformation; the second set, about the Daidala, concern a transformation that is followed by destruction. In the Hellotia, the story of the burning

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of young women leads to their divine transformations: this is either the aitiological narrative of a heroine cult or a story that was created to explain an existing cult. Too little is known about the cult to explain the full ritual and its interaction with fire, but the possible explanations suggest the power of fire in the cultural imagination, as well as the continuing topos of the young woman who is sacrificed for the city—although with some noticeable modifications. As we will see, the material evidence also suggests the importance to the cult of doll-like representations of the burned women, which were possibly hidden during the ritual, possibly burned. Similar themes and activities can be traced in the stories that explain the ritual of the Daidala; but, in this cult, the young 'woman' who is burned has never been real—and the female figure, constructed, adorned, and burned as a gift from mortals to gods, is revealed to be a shared secret.

These themes of real and unreal, secrecy and revelation, mortal and divinity that emerge across this case study are united in the final section—the second bookend—the story of Thetis. Strictly, she is a shape-shifter, and she will make an appearance in this case study as a manipulator of fire in Achilles' story. But towards the end of this case study, we picture her in an earlier episode of her life, before she is married to the mortal Peleus. As he struggles to contain her, Thetis changes shape—and in one of her transformations, she becomes fire. The change is brief, one of many, but, nevertheless, it sparks both parallels and contrasts with the opening figure of Pandora and her story—and reflections from across the case study on the narrative relationships between women, fire, secrecy, and revelation. Consideration of Thetis and her metamorphosis then leads us to consider the emotional significance of these stories of fire and transformation, one that draws attention to what we may now recognize as a 'fight' response to extreme events and emotions.

Exchange: Pandora

We start, appropriately, with Pandora, who comes into being as an 'evil' (*kakon*) given to man by Zeus in punishment for the human acquisition of fire. This is the culmination of a series of deceptions and punishments between Zeus and Prometheus. Crucially, Prometheus tricked Zeus into accepting a sacrifice in which he received bones hidden in fat, rather than meat; as a result, the King of the Gods has held back for himself the knowledge of fire, but Prometheus steals it, by concealing it in a fennel stalk. Zeus is enraged when he sees it gleaming in the world of men—and, 'in exchange for fire' (*anti puros*), he gives mankind a gift; this is the story of Pandora's creation.[4] It is told in two versions by Hesiod,

[4] The phrase '*anti puros*' is used in Hes. *Op.* 57 and *Theog.* 570.

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in the *Theogony* and in the *Works and Days*, and in each case—while all the story elements are present in both—they receive different emphases, one drawing out scenes that are only alluded to in the other.[5] In the case study, Earth, I focused on the version in the *Works and Days*, which draws attention to Pandora as a product of manufacture.[6] But here the account given in Hesiod's *Theogony* comes into this analysis: the emphasis of this version rests not on the substance or process of her creation, but rather on how she is adorned. What lies beneath that decoration remains elusive: it is evoked and alluded to, described in terms of a curious mixture of animal, human, and god.[7] In this version, Pandora is not 'Pandora', but remains nameless. She is described instead as 'evil', 'a trap', and 'a curse';[8] when gods and men gaze upon her with wonder, they gaze on *dolon aipun*, 'a steep deception'.[9]

The story is unambiguously misogynistic, as explored by much current scholarship. Some have taken an anthropological approach: William Furley, for example, has argued that we should think of it primarily as related to marriage and the exchange of women *between hearths*, rather than, as Martin West suggests, in his commentary on the *Theogony*, as aitiological.[10] Furley draws on the work of the anthropologist Edmund Leach to support his argument that this myth (in both its versions) 'takes the viewpoint of the husband' and to develop his observations on the curious 'ambiguity in the status of wives', such that, as Furley reads Hesiod, 'wives in themselves are bad for men; their redeeming feature is their capacity to produce children (sons preferably).'[11] But other perspectives offer different viewpoints on this aspect, noting how, in neither of Hesiod's versions, does the creation of Pandora introduce an unambiguously positive reflection on human relations and reproduction. Quite the opposite, in fact: in the *Theogony*, the description of the pandora-figure's creation leads to a description of woman installed in a man's home, simply consuming anything he produces and not herself creating anything:[12]

> For from her comes the race of female women: for of her is the deadly race and tribe of women, a great woe for mortals, dwelling with men, no companions of baneful poverty but only of luxury. As when bees in vaulted beehives nourish the drones, partners in evil works—all day long until the sun goes down, every day, the bees hasten and set up the white honeycombs, while the

[5] As Vernant (1974: 177), who argues that they should be treated as a whole; but cf. Loraux (1981: 79) who works with the importance of the differences. Fraser (2011) explores the ways in which the two poems intersect with regard to the Pandora episode, and the internal expansion of passages within the episode in the *Works and Days*. West (1966: 307) in his commentary on the *Theogony* notes that there are three myths wrapped up in this story—the first sacrifice, the theft of fire, the first woman, 'all probably traditional, which could have been told separately'; also cited by Furley 1981: 190.

[6] Hes. *Op.* 79–82.

[7] Hes. *Theog.* 61–62 (human), 62–63 (divinity), 67 (animal).

[8] Hes. *Theog.* 570 and 585 (evil), 589 (trap), 592 (curse).

[9] Hes. *Theog.* 589 (trans. Most 2018b; see Loraux 1981: 82).

[10] Furley 1981: 189, citing West 1966: 305.

[11] Furley 1981: 192.

[12] Hes. *Theog.* 590–602 (trans. Most 2018a).

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> drones remain inside among the vaulted beehives and gather into their own stomachs the toil of others—in just the same way high-thundering Zeus set up women as an evil for mortal men, as partners in distressful works.

While there is a brief reference to the possibility of marrying a 'good' wife who supports the household, the poem moves past this very quickly, and rests its focus on the difficulties and apparent disconnection that arise between men and women.[13] In *Works and Days*, Pandora similarly does not engage in a relationship with mortal man—but she does bring with her a jar, one that she opens to release evils that flood the world, leaving only Hope behind. This image may also relate to the notion of children and their potential for bringing sorrow; but, even if that is the case, the idea of any kind of mortal relationality is still markedly absent from this description.[14] Every element pictured in this episode is isolated; even the evils seem alone:[15]

> But the woman removed the great lid from the storage jar with her hands and scattered all its contents abroad—she wrought baneful evils for human beings. Only Hope remained there in its unbreakable home under the mouth of the storage jar, and did not fly out; for before that could happen she closed the lid of the storage jar, by the plans of the aegis-holder, the cloud-gatherer, Zeus. But countless other miseries roam among mankind; for the earth is full of evils, and the sea is full; and some sicknesses come upon men by day, and others by night, of their own accord, bearing evils to mortals in silence, since the counsellor Zeus took their voice away.

There is, of course, much more to say about the rich imagery of this episode, with regard to the interactions of mortals, male and female, and gods. If this seems a distinctly bitter poem, then other poems of that general period may give us some larger sense not only of misogyny within that broader society, but also of the anxieties that may have helped to fuel it. For example, poem 7 (*Women*) by Semonides of Amorgos, who was writing in the seventh century BCE, describes types of women that Zeus has created, who originate somehow in animals or elements, and/or whose characteristics are called to mind by comparing them to these phenomena.[16] In contrast with the somewhat static, monolithic viewpoint offered by Hesiod's cosmological vision, Semonides introduces a vicious satire on male and female relations, comprising many different types of women—all of

[13] The lines are 609–612; Zeitlin (1996: 63–64) draws attention to the ambiguity of the phrase *atartēroio genethlēs* (610) which may refer to either the 'race [of women]' or 'progeny' and so may be a comment on the potential grief caused by uncertain relationships or the unknowable outcome of children.

[14] Zeitlin 1996: 71.

[15] Hes. *Theog*. 94–104 (trans. Most 2018a, adapted).

[16] See discussion above, Introduction, pp. 23–24.

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them, in a variety of different ways, unable or refusing to participate in the activities that may lead to the creation of a successful and happy home.[17] As with Hesiod's *Works and Days*, if we listen hard, we can hear the driving anxieties of smallholder farmers living in gossip-ridden villages. In describing women in these ways, the two poets may have been drawing on similar imagery, or even have known each other's work: it is notable that, where Hesiod compares women to useless drones, Semonides uses the image of the bee to evoke its one positive image of women.[18]

Semonides' poem is also helpful to consider alongside the Hesiodic stories of woman's creation for what it does not say about this topic. Each type of woman, Semonides suggests, comes 'out of' its animal or element counterpart: but the mechanics of this process are left oblique.[19] The origins of these women remain ambiguous: as Semonides describes them, they blur with their animal/natural sources, lacking clear articulation as human creatures. In contrast, man, for all that he may carry some responsibility for his individual situation, is a separate, suffering entity. Both Hesiod and Semonides, in their different ways, note that man is the recipient of this 'gift' from the divine, and, like the environment in which he lives, it is his responsibility to manage it.[20] And, in that context, then, we return to the question of the role of fire in Pandora's story, and its significance as an element of destruction and transformation.

We can perhaps see this more clearly if we return to the original creation story. With Froma Zeitlin, we might see Pandora as 'the outcome of a game of wits between Prometheus and Zeus…Zeus wins, of course'.[21] But it could be argued that the outcome needs to recognize a couple of winners—after all, even while Zeus triumphs, man gets to keep fire, sexual pleasure, and beauty—and, well, at least he got to take part. In contrast, the pandora-figure's role is purely instrumental: she is either a voiceless, nameless creature in the *Theogony* or the Pandora of the *Works and Days,* whose voice and capacity for deception are placed within her, even as she herself remains silent.[22] She is little more than a marker, a turning

[17] Semonides' project is 'to shatter the Hesiodic unities' (Loraux 1981: 91); the result is an assembly of 'isolated units', who do not connect with their animals or elements of origin, with the men to whom they are attached, or to each other (104–105).

[18] Sem. 7.83–93.

[19] As a poem about origins, this work certainly preserves a sense of ambiguity: the Greek word used to describe the creation of each woman is *ek*, which loosely means 'out of' (see the entry in LSJ). As Loraux (1981: 101–103) observes, it offers a fundamental ambiguity of meaning, moving between filiation, fabrication, and metamorphosis (although the latter is rare, an example is found in Semon. 7.7). Thus, the ambiguity is one not only of Archaic thought about the word, but also about the Greek question of origins (as Loraux, ibid. suggests), which reaches from Hesiod to Aristotle.

[20] Osborne (2001b: 60) sets this project in the context of its performance and suggests that Semonides also introduces the concerns of each man listening: 'The situation in which Hesiod has all men caught up together has become the unavoidable embarrassment of every individual separately. Hesiod simply asserted the double bind of marriage; Semonides demonstrates it by producing in his audience at the same time both disgust for each other's and desire for their own wives'.

[21] Zeitlin 1996: 54.

[22] Hes. *Op*. 76–80.

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post, signifying a crucial cosmological change of pace in the race between divine and human, as Zeus pulls smoothly into the lead.

And Zeus liked to put down such markers: at Delphi stood two *omphalos* stones. One was material and marked the centre of the world; the other was mythical and indicated the sovereignty of Zeus. When Kronos, Zeus' father, was anxiously consuming his own progeny lest they take his place, Rhea, Zeus' mother, passed him a stone instead of Zeus—thus keeping Zeus alive to plot her husband's death.[23] That stone, set in the landscape, signified the mastery of Zeus, but it also, importantly, drew attention to how he had done this—through a deception. Zeus survived, we are told, *anti lithou*: he was left behind 'in place of stone', when his father, Kronos, busily consuming his children, swallowed the stone instead of the baby.[24] As other scholars have observed, there is an important echo here between this story and the story told of the pandora-figure in the *Theogony*,[25] who is created *anti puros*, that is, 'in place of fire'. Indeed, by comparing the stories, we can read these two tales of substitutions as offering insights into the importance of exchange and reciprocity;[26] but they are also significant in that they draw attention to the role of revelation, deception, and disguise in those arrangements.

This, in turn, underlines an important difference between the two tales. At first sight, we might try to find equivalence between the entities that are concealed and substituted in each story: in the deception of Kronos, it is a stone for a child-god; in the deception of man, it is a woman for (the stealing of) fire. But that apparent equivalence is itself deceptive: the myth of Zeus' substitution establishes his deception of Kronos as necessary for survival, and its medium, the stone, becomes a monument to the child-god's eventual triumph; deception, in that instance, ceases with the struggle. But this is not the case when we turn to the substitution of woman for fire: in this story, each item is acquired by the other through a gift exchange that turns on an act of deception. In those duplicitous trades, the true nature of the gift is concealed—fire is hidden in a fennel stalk (man deceives gods); woman's nature obscured within the pandora-figure (gods deceive man)—and is only revealed after the exchange. The deception marks the fundamental mistrust at the heart of mortal and divine interactions: stones and fennel stalks, sacrifices and gifts, men, women, gods, all can be something other than they appear; and—in the moment of revelation—what we think we have or are can be suddenly transformed or destroyed.

Deceived

I start with the story of Meleager, which is usefully summarized by Pausanias: 'The story about the brand, how it was given by the Fates to Althaia, how Meleager

[23] Lyk. *Alex.* 1201. [24] Hes. *Theog.* 489. [25] See Zeitlin 1996: 79–81.
[26] Zeitlin 1996: 81, citing Arthur 1982: 72–73.

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was not to die before the brand was consumed by fire, and how Althaia burnt it up in a passion.'[27] He goes on to give us a fragment from a play by Phrynichos (from *Pleuronian Women*): 'For chill doom / He escaped not, but a swift flame consumed him, / As the brand was destroyed by his terrible mother, contriver of evil.'[28] This succinct overview of the myth omits the circumstances of Althaia's actions, and the complex of divine and human passions that surround them.[29] Of course, there are several different versions. In the *Iliad*, there is no brand, only a failed maternal curse.[30] In a story possibly reshaped for his particular purpose, Phoinix tells Achilles how Meleager kills the Kalydonian boar, sent by Artemis in punishment because Oineus (Meleager's father) forgot to sacrifice to her among the other gods. Once the boar is killed, Artemis prompts conflict between the Aitolians of Kalydon and the Kouretes. It seems that Althaia's relatives are fighting alongside the latter forces, and Meleager kills her brothers. Althaia curses him. Meleager then withdraws from fighting, putting Kalydon in severe peril—until Althaia withdraws her curse.

In this version, the omissions are appropriate to the setting: Phoinix is telling this story in an attempt to persuade Achilles to stop sulking; he therefore tells it very selectively. In this version, instead, Meleager's mother, Althaia, curses Meleager for killing her brother and we are told that the Erinyes hear her prayer;[31] similarly, Phoinix does observe that Meleager never receives the gifts that his fellow citizens have promised him for returning to battle.[32] But no mention is made of Meleager's death, presumably because it would rather undermine the case that Phoinix is trying to make. Hesiod also omits mention of the brand in his account; instead, Meleager is killed by Apollo in battle with the Kouretes.[33]

It is in the version by Bacchylides that Meleager—in his own words—describes how his mother used the brand to end his life, after he had killed her brothers in battle. Bacchylides/Meleager describes the response of his mother very briefly: she is *kakopotmos*, 'ill-fated', and *atarbaktos*, 'dauntless'.[34] The events that lead up to this episode, in which Artemis sends a monstrous rampaging boar to destroy the landscape, can be read as a figurative parallel for Althaia's emotional response to Meleager's crime. Unsurprisingly, it is Ovid's account that provides a nuanced, vivid insight into both Althaia's emotional distress—the pull of her feeling as a mother on the one hand, and as a sister on the other hand—and then of Meleager's

[27] Paus. 10.31.4 (trans. Jones 1935).
[28] Phrynichos *TrGF* 3 F6 = Paus. 10.31.4 (trans. Jones 1935).
[29] On alternative accounts of Meleager's death see p. 91 in the case study Air. After Meleager dies in battle, Althaia and Kleopatra hang themselves and are turned into birds.
[30] Hom. *Il.* 9.529–600. [31] Hom. *Il.* 9.565–572. [32] Hom. *Il.* 9.598–599.
[33] In Hesiod's *Catalogue of Women* (F22 Most 2018b) Meleager is killed by Apollo.
[34] Bacchyl. *Ode* 5.136–144; *kakopotmos* (138), *atarbaktos* (139). The story is told in brief form in Aesch. *Cho.* 603–612; and probably also told by Euripides (who may have introduced the version in which Atalanta becomes an important character). Garner (1994) has argued that it was likely in Stesichoros' version (*P.Oxy.* 57.3876. FF1–36; see esp. F4 = F191 Davies and Finglass 2014 with comm.), but the fragmentary nature of the evidence makes this uncertain.

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sense of the power of that flaming brand within him.[35] Pausanias gives a number of versions of this story as he describes the paintings by Polygnotos in the *lesche* in Delphi, including the Homeric story and the account given by Hesiod, which, Pausanias notes, agrees with one found in the *Minyas*, in which it is Apollo who kills Meleager. He then gives the version which describes Althaia burning the brand, attributing it to a play by Phrynichos and noting that the story was already well known by everyone across Greece.[36]

For Furley, Meleager is 'the human holocaust sacrifice demanded by Artemis for the offence to her godhead'.[37] Indeed, it is the case that Meleager is consumed, and propitiation may, indeed, be a dynamic of this narrative.[38] But this is not an aspect emphasized by the ancient accounts, which rather draw attention to the role played by Althaia and emphasize the suspicion that surrounds a woman caught between her natal and marital relationships. And this perspective reveals some of the key motifs that we have seen in discussion of the Pandora myth, albeit arranged in a slightly different configuration. Here it is the absence of fire, rather than its presence, that gives man (fleeting) power. But, at the same time, it exposes him to a constant vulnerability embodied in his mother; the gift given him by the gods is instrumentalized by a woman. In turn, the myth divests this woman, Althaia, of her social role as a nurturer: her extreme emotions drive her to destroy her own child—and she becomes an object of risk.

These themes also appear in the next two examples, in which the risk that confronts the hero is embodied in his mother. Meleager's invulnerability paradoxically creates or marks his vulnerability, and this motif is repeated in the famous story of Achilles, although its manifestation is very different. Achilles is thrown into the fire at night by his mother Thetis, in secret, away from the eyes of his father, Peleus; she then anoints Achilles with ambrosia during the day.[39] But Thetis is forced to stop when Peleus awakes one night, and sees 'his dear son convulsing in the flames'.[40] She leaves the palace immediately—and so her son's transformation

[35] Ov. *Met.* 8.451–514.

[36] Paus. 10.31.3–4; he notes that it was probably because it was well known that Phrynichos did not elaborate the story as he would have done if it had been his particular invention. The title of Phrynichos' play suggests that it focused on the family of Meleager's wife (Laophone, daughter of Pleuron, according to Pherekydes *FGrH* 3 F9; on the problems of this genealogy, see Fowler *EGM* 2: 137–138).

[37] Furley 1981: 156.

[38] If it is simply that Meleager must be sacrificed to propitiate the gods then we are already moving away from Furley's overriding paradigm, since Meleager's mode of death is very different from that of Hellotis, for example, whose death it is that prompts the need for propitiation (see further in this case study).

[39] Ap. Rhod. 4.867–879. According to the scholiast on this passage, these actions appear to have been thought of as a test by some commenting in antiquity: those children who managed to survive it were immortal. But this comment also raises questions about the significance of fire when the scholiast notes that the author of the *Aigimion* described Thetis throwing her children into cauldrons of water (cf. schol. Ar. *Nub.* 1068; schol. Hom. *Il.* 16.37). Lyk. *Alex.* 178–179 reports that Thetis killed six children before Peleus saved Achilles.

[40] Ap. Rhod. 4.874.

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from mortal to immortal is not achieved. Achilles' point of vulnerability, of mortality, is the heel by which his mother held him as a baby during this process.[41] Achilles still achieves a form of immortality—most obviously, in the epic poem that recounted his intrepid deeds and, within Greek culture, through the hero cult that was paid to him.[42] But within this narrative, he is a victim of his mother's transgressions of the ontological boundary between mortality and immortality.

This tale, in its details, aligns very closely with the story of Demophon's treatment at the hands of Demeter, as described in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (2).[43] The child of King Keleus and Queen Metaneira, Demophon is held in the fire at night and anointed with ambrosia during the day by Demeter, who has taken refuge in the royal household as she searches and mourns for Persephone. When Metaneira interrupts the process one night, Demeter loses her temper and, throwing Demophon to the ground, explains that now he is subject to the Fates, whereas he would have been both ageless and deathless if she had been allowed to continue. What happens to Demophon is unclear in the poem—although all is clearly not well, and other versions do allude to this process killing him.[44] As with Achilles, we know that Demophon is commemorated and worshiped in later ritual. Unlike Achilles, the poem suppresses Demophon's death: Demeter's words make it clear that the child will achieve a form of immortality, receiving 'unfailing honour' as a recipient of a particular type of ritual.[45] Once more, there is a transformation of a sort here, marked by Demeter's use of fire—a fire that promises divine life, but, thwarted, brings a mortal death. Something of this paradigm is apparent in the next section, too (although with a gendered twist), where fire that brings mortal death may also lead to divine life.

Destroyed

Semele, Asklepios, and Herakles

We start with Semele, mortal mother of Dionysos, by Zeus. As we will see in the case study on Water, there were various, local versions of the Semele story, which interacted with other myth cycles, and which did not feature fire. But by far the most famous story of Semele's end is her immolation by divine thunderbolt; after which Zeus removes the embryonic Dionysos from her body, sewing him into his own thigh in order to incubate him. In different versions, Semele, or Thyone as

[41] On Achilles' invulnerability see West 2013: 150–151, citing West 2007: 444–446; he suggests that it was in the epic cycle, although not mentioned before Statius.
[42] See discussions Hooker 1988; Hedreen 1991.
[43] *Hom. Hymn Dem.* 225–274.
[44] *Hom. Hymn Dem.* 284–291. Demophon dies in, e.g., Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.5.1.
[45] *Hom. Hymn Dem.* 265–267. The mock-battles of the *Ballētus* festival are known from Hesychius *s.v. Ballētus*.

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she is called in some sources, either remains dead, or returns from the dead, or achieves a form of immortality. As we explore the different accounts of this narrative pattern, we should also remember that Semele also had a presence in the ancient landscape. As Pausanias notes, it was possible to visit the site of her death and her tomb in Thebes: he mentions her ruined bridal chamber into which, in his time, no one was allowed to enter, and, near a temple of Dionysos, a statue of her along with the ruins of her tomb.[46]

In literary sources, Semele is first heard of in the *Iliad*, where Zeus describes her as the mother of his son Dionysos.[47] Nothing is said there about the manner of Dionysos' birth, but it may be hinted at in Hesiod's *Theogony*, which also notes that she received divine status for giving birth to an immortal.[48] As Thyone, she first appears in the *Homeric Hymn to Dionysos* (1). That poem indicates a plethora of stories around the god's birth, listing different locales, and asserting that Mount Nysa was the genuine spot, before breaking off.[49] The first extant, explicit account of Semele's death by thunderbolt is given by Pindar in his second *Olympian Ode*. He tells us that 'she died in the roar of the thunderbolt';[50] while *Pythian* 3 observes that Thyone may have suffered, but she also had the consolation of Zeus coming to her bed.[51] Other parts of the story are found in *Pythian* 11, which places Semele among the gods.[52] Later still, Pausanias refers to another version, in which she is brought back to life, quite literally, as Dionysos conveys her out of Hades.[53]

Semele's mortal destruction by thunderbolt is prompted by her anxiety to see her lover, Zeus, in his divine form. At the heart of this, in many versions, is Hera, who, filled with resentment of Semele, deceives her into bring about her fatal desire, often it seems by appearing to her in the form of a female confidante or guide. This seems to occur in the *Semele*, a play by Aeschylus that survives in fragments, in which Hera appears, disguised as an old penniless priestess.[54] This version of

[46] See bridal chamber, log, and altar at 9.12.4; statue and tomb at 9.16.6–7. In Eur. *Bacch.* 5–10, Dionysos describes the same monuments. Semele: see also in the case study Water, p. 165.

[47] Hom. *Il.* 14.323–325; Thyone first found in *Hom. Hymn to Dionysos* (1), also used by Sappho (F17 Campbell 1982), and on vase paintings, e.g., a black-figure hydria, in the manner of the Lysippides Painter, Florence 3790 (*LIMC* VII.1, 'Semele', no. 36; Kossatz-Deissmann 1994).

[48] Hes. *Theog.* 940–942.

[49] The story of Dionysos being sewn into Zeus' thigh is indicated by the need for Zeus to bear the child and may also be the reason why it refers to Dionysos as *eiraphiōtes* ('Insewn'), which may derive from *rhaptō* to sew. The meaning of the term was debated in antiquity, see ΣA *Il.* 1.39. But as Gantz (1993: 473) reminds us, the tale could have been invented to explain the epithet, rather than vice versa.

[50] Pind. *Ol.* 2.22–27. [51] Pind. *Pyth.* 3.96–99. [52] Pind. *Pyth.* 11.1.

[53] Paus. 2.31.2; he professes that since she was a consort of Zeus, he cannot imagine her dying at all; cf. Pind. *Ol.* 2.44, *Pyth.* 11.1; Cyzicene Epigrams *AP* 3.1; Diod. Sic. 4.25.4; Apollod. *Bib.* 3.5.3; Plut. *Mor.* 565f–566a.

[54] Gantz (1993: 474–475) suggests that Aeschylus included the story of Hera's deception in a play that now only exists in fragments; he has argued, as now has Sommerstein, that these fragments are from the *Semele*: Aesch. FF220a (Sommerstein 2008) (= F168, 168a Radt; Pl. *Resp.* 381d). Two lines from the fragments (F220a 16–17) are attributed by Asklepiades to the *Xantriai* ('Wool-Carders'; schol. Ar. *Ran.* 1344) followed by Dillon 2002: 96 and Dickie 2001: 80; but Sommerstein (2008: 224–227) argues for the *Semele* or *Hydrophoroi*.

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the play, with Hera's deception, also seems to be alluded to in Euripides' *Bacchae*, where Semele's destruction is described, and attributed to Hera's *hybris*.[55] Later accounts provide more detail about Hera's role, alongside a variety of motives. In Ovid, Hera disguises herself as a nurse from Epidaurus, one Beroe, in order to suggest to Semele that she should seek proof that her lover is divine.[56] Hyginus also includes the nurse Beroe, and in his version, she persuades Semele that she will gain greater pleasure.[57] Diodorus Siculus provides two versions that offer quite different explanations of Semele's death. The first neatly reverses the traditional theme of Hera's jealousy: because Zeus visits her secretly and does not speak to her while he is with her, Semele becomes worried that he despises her—she asks that he behave as he does when visiting Hera. In the second, it is Zeus who wants Semele dead, taking the baby from her before her death, so that his and her child, the god Dionysos, may be born of two immortals.[58]

The descriptions of Semele's immolation involve more than simply a burning; rather, they emphasize the awesome, terrifying nature of divinity that she witnessed. Euripides, in Dionysos' prologue to the *Bacchae*, draws attention to the role of fire in Semele's death.[59] But as well as its destructive quality, he emphasizes its divine nature, so that it also provides a frame for the birth of Dionysos. Something similar may be implied by the description given by Diodorus Siculus, who describes Semele as 'unable to endure the magnitude of Zeus' presence' before she is killed by the fire. Apollodorus does mention fire but says that Semele was frightened to death.[60] It is possible that images that show her whole body, rather than a burned figure, may confirm this approach—but this may simply be a stylistic choice.[61] Ovid finds some slight thread of humour, picturing her as unable to bear even Zeus' second-rank thunderbolts.[62] These multiple versions of Semele's death present many different, roiling emotions: alongside awe and terror, envy is a key theme—both Semele's and Hera's, and, in other versions, that of Zeus.[63] It is also a

[55] Eur. *Bacch.* 1–9.

[56] Ov. *Met.* 3. 275–278; on this type of transformation into an old woman, see Barchiesi 2024c ad loc.

[57] Hyg. *Fab.* 167, 179. Apollodorus (*Bib.* 3.4.3) alludes to the deception but is unclear about the specific details.

[58] Diod. Sic. 4.2.1–3, cf. 5.52.1–2 (the reasoning assumes Semele is immortal before death).

[59] Eur. *Bacch.* 1–4.

[60] Diod. Sic. 4.2.3; Apollod. *Bib.* 3.4.3.

[61] E.g., A red-figure vase (Berkeley 8.3316) on which Hermes is removing the child from the still form of Semele.

[62] Ov. *Met.* 3.305–307; a 'jocular Ovidian innovation' according to Barchiesi 2024c ad loc.

[63] For example, a number of sources indicate that Aktaion was killed by Artemis under instruction by Zeus, because that young man had designs on Semele. It may be deduced from the fragmentary reading of Hes. F160 (Most 2018b); Stesichoros 236 (Campbell 1991); Akousilaos *FGrH* 2 F33. Gantz (1993: 479) suggests it may be read into the fragments of Aeschylus' *Toxotides* and may have been linked to the *Semele*. Later literary evidence concentrates on Aktaion's perceived offence against Artemis herself, although its exact nature varies (see Eur. *Bacch.* 337–340; Callim. *Hymn* 5.107–118; Apollod. *Bib.* 3.4.4; Diod. Sic. 4.81.4–5; Ov. *Met.* 3.138–252, with Barchiesi 2024c ad loc. on the various versions of this story, especially the nature of the hunter's error).

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crucial force in the other two myth stories in this section: those of Asklepios and Herakles, respectively, and we turn to them next.

While both Herakles and Asklepios are apparently killed by fire, both achieve immortality, reflecting a leitmotif, in each of their stories, of the conquering of death. Starting with Asklepios, the theme of fire, and escape from destruction, is a part of his story from his earliest years. As a baby, he is rescued by his father Apollo from his mother, Koronis' funeral pyre. Koronis does not die by fire, but she is the victim of the envy of a god: because she chooses a mortal, Ischys Eilatides, over Apollo, the god then sends his sister, Artemis, to kill Koronis.[64] In his earliest appearance, in the *Iliad,* Asklepios is a mortal healer with no hint of divinity, although he does learn his craft from the centaur, Cheiron.[65] Hesiod, however, is aware of his divine parent, Apollo.[66] Hesiod is also the first to tell the story of his death by thunderbolt, but does not mention what activity prompted this punishment.[67] We learn this first from Stesichoros, in a fragment of his poem, *Eriphyle*, which reports that Asklepios is blasted by Zeus for raising a dead man, Hippolytos, from the dead.[68] The story is also alluded to by Pindar in *Pythian* 3; by the chorus of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*; and by Apollo in the first few lines of Euripides' *Alkestis*.[69] The tale continues to be the focus of Asklepios' biography in epinician, Classical, and, indeed, later dramatic retellings.[70] Asklepios was not the only one to attempt resurrection of another, nor the only one to suffer this resulting punishment—Salmoneus a king of Elis, and son of Aiolos (a son of Deukalion, not the Keeper of the Winds whom Odysseus meets in the *Odyssey*) is another example (Figure 3.1)—but the outcome for Asklepios was remarkable.[71]

[64] Pind. *Pyth.* 3.8–46. Tsitsibakou-Vasalos (2010: 42) provides an interesting exploration of the imagery of light and dark in this poem, but for some reason continues to argue that it forms a parallel with Thyone 'as privileged with a divine lover and suffering a fiery death'. Part of this may be a misunderstanding of the reference in Paus. (2.12.1) to the statue of Athena which was also struck by lightning; this is not a comparison with what had killed Koronis but refers back to 2.11.1 where Pausanias has described another temple of Athena also struck by lightning.

Hesiod has a raven bring Apollo the news; the scholia to Pindar tell us that the story went on to describe how Apollo, in rage turned the raven from white to black. Hes. F239 (Most 2018b); schol. *Pyth.* 3.52b (Drachmann 1910); Gantz (1993: 91) notes a mid-fifth-century red-figure skyphos depicting Apollo with a white bird above him (Mormino Coll. no number). Akousilaos (*FGrH* 2 F17) observes that the young woman was motivated by a fear that the god would eventually overlook her. Artemis seems to have killed many women in this attack, a detail that also occurs in Pherekydes' *FGrH* 3 F3. In a version in schol. *Pyth.* 3.59 (Drachmann 1910) Apollo also kills Ischys.

[65] Asklepios and his sons: Hom. *Il.* 2.731–732, 4.193–194, 11.833; Cheiron: Hom. *Il.* 4.218–219.

[66] Hes. FF55 and 56 (Most 2018b).

[67] Hes. FF55 and 56 (Most 2018b).

[68] Stesichoros *Eriphyle* F 92a–e (Davies and Finglass 2014) with Hippolytos given as the name of the resurrected man in 92a–c.

[69] Pind. *Pyth.* 3.55–58 (the scholiast names Hippolytos as the resurrected individual); Aesch. *Ag.* 1022–1024; and Eur. *Alc.* 1–7.

[70] Wickkiser 2008: 44, citing Hes. F55 (Most 2018b). Ov. *Fast.* 6.733–762 tells the story of his birth, his bringing back to life of Hippolytos, and the subsequent blasting. In Diodorus Siculus (4.71.1–4), the story is further elaborated, so that Hades complains to Zeus about Asklepios' healing abilities, because they are reducing the number of dead.

[71] Salmoneus also attempted to raise the dead and was punished by Zeus by being blasted by a thunderbolt; Hes. FF10.27 and 26 (Most 2018b).

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Figure 3.1 Athenian red-figure column-krater, 460 BCE, attributed to a Member of the Earlier Mannerist Group. The main panel shows Salmoneus, pretending to be Zeus, with a sword and a thunderbolt. Art Institute Chicago. Gift of Philip D. Armour and Charles L. Hutchinson. 1889.16
CC0 1.0 UNIVERSAL (www.artic.edu/artworks/164/column-krater-mixing-bowl).

Instead of putting an end to him, this blast of lightning transforms Asklepios. Even as his story makes very clear his humanity (for example, that he had to train in his art[72]), Asklepios becomes a divinity. Indeed, he seems to move seamlessly from a mortal to a hero to a god. His divine identity develops alongside his mortal relevance, through a growing relationship to the medical professionals of the time, with doctors claiming him as their patron god,[73] and sanctuaries advertising his healing methods as sometimes close in nature to real-life medical practices.[74] And, of course, he and his cult were famously introduced into Athens by the playwright Sophocles in the fifth century, establishing his significance in the ancient Athenian pantheon, and thus more widely across ancient Greek culture.[75]

[72] Pind. *Pyth*. 3.45–46. [73] Pl. *Symp*. 186e; cf. Wickkiser 2008: 53–54.
[74] E.g., as described in the Epidaurian *Iamata*, e.g., B12 (LiDonnici 1995); cf. Wickkiser 2008: 54.
[75] Wickkiser 2008: 90–103.

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We may gain some more nuanced understanding of the narrative complexity of Asklepios' ontological transformation from introducing, at this point, our third figure in this section, Herakles. Ambiguity is also a theme of Herakles' ontology: Pindar famously described him as *heros theos*, that is, as either and/or both 'a hero' and 'a god'.[76] In the first case study in this volume, Earth, we examined the depiction, in Euripides' *Herakles*, of Herakles' response to his discovery that he has killed his children—and the imagery of petrifaction in the interchange between Theseus and Herakles.[77] Here we turn to another set of stories in the Herakles' myth—his immolation—following which, in later versions, he is transported, as a god, to Olympos, where he marries the goddess Hebe.[78]

Diodorus Siculus recounts the sequence of events that leads to his death: this starts at Kenaion, where Herakles has decided to perform a sacrifice, and so sends his attendant Lichas to fetch for him a particular shirt and robe from his wife, Deianeira. Aware that Herakles is in love with Iole, Deianeira takes the opportunity to anoint the shirt with what she thinks is a love potion, given her by the centaur Nessos; it is in fact a poison. When Herakles puts on the shirt he is seized with pain, and becomes so distressed that he kills Lichas and returns to Trachis. He then sends attendants to Delphi to ask the god what he needs to do; meanwhile, learning what has happened, Deianeira hangs herself. At Delphi, Apollo states that Herakles, along with his armour and weapons, must be taken to Oete, and a huge pyre should be built by him; what follows will be up to Zeus. The instructions are carried out and, once the pyre is built, Herakles climbs onto it, and asks his comrades to set it ablaze. Each man refuses, until, at last, Philoktetes accepts the order. In return, he receives the gift of Herakles' bow and arrows. Once the pyre was lit, Diodorus goes on:[79]

> immediately lightning also fell from the heavens and the pyre was wholly consumed. After this, when the companions of Iolaüs came to gather up the bones of Herakles and found not a single bone anywhere, they assumed that, in accordance with the words of the oracle, he had passed from among men into the company of the gods. These men, therefore, performed the offerings to the dead as to a hero, and after throwing up a great mound of earth returned to Trachis. Following their example Menoetius, the son of Actor and a friend of Herakles, sacrificed a boar and a bull and a ram to him as to a hero and commanded that each year in Opus Herakles should receive the sacrifices and honours of a hero.

[76] Pind. *Nem.* 3.22; Herakles' ambiguous status is well discussed in Stafford 2012: 228–244.
[77] Eur. *Heracl.* 1394–1399 (trans. Kovacs 1998) and see pp. 53–54, in case study Earth.
[78] In Euripides' *Herakles*, Theseus seems to refer to Herakles' later worship (1331–1333); see also *Heracl.* 910–914 discussed further in this section. Diodorus 4.10.7 rationalizes this apotheosis as the reward for the twelve labours, Pindar (*Nem.* 1.67–72) for helping the gods in their battle against the giants; see Stafford 2012: 172.
[79] Diod. Sic. 4.38–39 (trans. Oldfather 1935).

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> Much the same thing was likewise done by the Thebans, but the Athenians were the first of all other men to honour Herakles with sacrifices like as to a god, and by holding up as an example for all other men to follow their own.

The tale, thus told, explains how Herakles gains his immortality, coupling his death on the pyre with his cult as a hero, then as a god. The moment of transformation is underlined: when the fire is lit, mortal flames are met with divine lightning, and Herakles' human remains disappear.[80] The idea of Herakles confronting death is found in many stories about the hero. Herakles consistently overcomes death—not only in his individual labours, but also, and more specifically, in surviving trips to the Underworld, and even, indeed, confronting Hades himself. The poet of the *Iliad* describes him wounding Hades;[81] and the story of his *katabasis* to fetch Hades' dog Kerberos is found in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.[82] Thus, this version of Herakles' end, in which his mortal stuff is consumed, links with other mythic tales in his cycle; it is neatly stitched to the story of Deianeira, as we will see; and it becomes a bead in the glorious epic cycle, since Philoktetes, by lighting Herakles' pyre, starts a journey that will end with Troy's destruction.[83]

But perhaps this narrative was not always so coherent. In Homer's *Iliad*, despite his overcoming Hades, Herakles appears simply to have died. Achilles describes him as unable to escape his fate, despite being loved by Zeus, because he was hated by Hera.[84] We do not know if that version of the story included his mortal body being burned. The poet of the *Odyssey* knew of another version: in the Underworld, Odysseus meets one version of Herakles (an *eidolon*, or 'image'), while another Herakles feasts with the gods.[85] Hesiod also knows this version: the same dual Herakles is found in the *Catalogue of Women*. But in the *Theogony*, Herakles is simply described as living on Olympos, married to Hebe,[86] and we do not know if this latter version included his having a parallel presence in the Underworld.

Similar questions can be asked about the visual evidence that depicts Herakles being married and/or welcomed into Olympos. These images indicate that the story of immortality was known in the seventh century BCE and broadly disseminated from at least the sixth century onwards, but they do not tell us about the

[80] In Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.7.7 he 'wafts up to heaven' (Frazer 1921).
[81] Hom. *Il.* 5.395–397. In later literature, e.g., Euripides *Alkestis*, Herakles wrestles Thanatos himself (1141–1142).
[82] Hom. *Il.* 8.362–369; *Od.* 11.623–626.
[83] On whether Philoktetes appeared in this role in the lost epic cycle see Holt 1992: 42, who is doubtful.
[84] Hom. *Il.* 18.117–119.
[85] Hom. *Od.* 11.601–604. But these lines have been argued to be an interpolation: see Stafford 2012: 173 on ancient and modern responses to this scene. For the literature and art works that may have included the story of Herakles' apotheosis, see Holt 1992.
[86] Hes. *Catalogue of Women* F22 (Most 2018b); Hes. *Theog* 950–955.

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fate of his mortal self.[87] The idea that a funeral pyre is somehow involved in Herakles' death appears first in imagery, dating to the mid-fifth century.[88] Slightly later vase paintings show it as part of the moment of transformation (e.g., on his way to the heavens, with the pyre far below).[89] In literature, we find it mentioned in Euripides' *Herakleidai* (910–914): a brief and difficult line by the Chorus seems to refer to the cremation, but the meaning is ambiguous. As Philip Holt translates: 'Herakles "escapes the story"…that he went to Hades when he was cremated', but he also notes that it could be read as 'perhaps that he was cremated and went to Hades.'[90] Famously, it seems likely that the second stasimon of Sophocles' *Trachiniai* also references it; indeed, that this was intended to bring to the audience's mind a fire-festival that was held on Mount Oita every year, in honour of Herakles.

The Roman author Livy describes a sacrifice to Herakles in the area, but very little was known about it until excavations in 1920 revealed evidence that this fire-festival was being celebrated as early as the sixth century.[91] Figurines of the hero, and inscriptions including his name, were found on the site. While Martin Nilsson argued that 'it can be assumed with certainty that the divinity of Herakles originated in the cult.'[92] others have suggested that it is equally possible that the story of self-immolation was the basis for a re-enactment of the myth, played out

[87] In *LIMC* V.1, 'Herakles', apotheosis scenes are found both under section VIII. 'Herakles' death and apotheosis' (Boardman 1990), and section IX. 'Herakles with Olympian gods', sub-section 'Hebe' (Laurens 1990); further scenes of marriage, presumably with Hebe, under 'Herakles' early life and family', sub-section, 'Herakles with wives and children' (in *LIMC* IV.1, Boardman 1988). As Boardman (1990: 131) notes, the introduction of Herakles to Olympos is primarily an Attic scene, but there is also a krater from Samos, seventh century BCE (*LIMC* IV.1, 'Herakles', no. 3330), a Melian amphora, early sixth century BCE (*LIMC* IV.1, 'Herakles', no. 1690) and a Korinthian aryballos, early sixth century BCE (*LIMC* IV.1, 'Herakles', no. 3331), with relevant scenes; as well as an image on a Lakonian cup dating to 560 BCE (*LIMC* IV.1, 'Herakles', no. 2861), an Ionian hydria from Caere, 530–520 BCE (*LIMC* IV.1, 'Herakles', no. 3292), a black-figure lekythos from Agrigento, *c.* 500 BCE (*LIMC* IV.1, 'Herakles', no. 3318); as well as vases from Gela (*LIMC* IV.1, 'Herakles', no. 3319, early fifth century BCE), Boiotia (*LIMC* IV.1, 'Herakles', no. 3323, undated; *LIMC* IV.1, 'Herakles', no. 3327, about 330 BCE), Murcia (*LIMC* IV.1, 'Herakles', no. 3328, early fourth century), and Ruvo (*LIMC* IV.1, 'Herakles', no. 3329, 335–330 BCE). Pausanias (3.18.11, 3.19.5) describes a scene on the throne and altar of Apollo at Amyklai (*LIMC* V.1, section VIII, 'Herakles' death and apotheosis', A. 'Herakles introduction to Olympus on foot'; Boardman 1990: no. 2863) and a silver altar in the Heraion at Argos (Paus. 2.17.6).

[88] *LIMC* V.1, 'Herakles'; Boardman 1990: Fragmentary red-figure krater, Villa Giulia 11688, *c.* 460 BCE (*LIMC* IV.1, 'Herakles', no. 2909); fragmentary red-figure krater, private collection, Leningrad and unpublished (*LIMC* no. 2909); red-figure psykter private collection, *c.* 460–450 BCE (*LIMC* IV.1, 'Herakles', no. 2910); see Holt 1989: 73, n. 16.

[89] *LIMC* V.1, 'Herakles'; Boardman 1990: 'Herakles', e.g., Attic red-figure pelike, Munich 2360, 420–400 BCE (*LIMC* V.1, 'Herakles', no. 2916); Attic red-figure bell krater, S. Agata de'Goti, Mustilli collection, 400–380 BCE (*LIMC* V.1, 'Herakles', no. 2918); and Attic red-figure kalyx krater, New York 52.11.18, 400–380 BCE (*LIMC* V.1, 'Herakles', no. 2917); see also nos. 2918, 2919, and 2920 for further examples from the fourth century BCE; also Holt 1989: 73, n. 19. Holt (1989: 74) considers why an artist might choose to omit the pyre beneath the soaring figures of Herakles and accompanying divinities.

[90] Holt 1989: 72.

[91] See Livy 36.30.3 (drawing on Polybius; see Briscoe 1981 ad loc.). Excavations are described by Pappadakis 1919. Finkelberg 1996: 139–143 on the interaction between the festival and the *Trachiniai*.

[92] Nilsson (1972: 204–206) argued for the myth as aitiology of the cult (quotation 204–205), although he does argue for an earlier set of myths that evoke Herakles as vanquishing death; cf. Holt 1989: 73.

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in the rites on Mount Oita.[93] Whether or not that ritual was intended, in its first instantiation, to re-enact simply the burning of a mortal and nothing further, we will never know; but it has been argued that the myth of Herakles' burning was itself introduced, from elsewhere, in order to explain an extant myth of apotheosis.[94] Acknowledging the variety and multiplicity of myths, it is now generally accepted that what appears to be a consolidated fabric of Heraklean myth likely comprises various threads that developed separately and were, over time, woven together in different stories, in different cults, across the Greek world.

While there is much to say about the ways in which the idea of Herakles' apotheosis was developed and presented in ancient literature, and how the cult of

Figure 3.2 Attic red-figure calyx-krater, 4th century BCE, showing Herakles above his pyre on his way to Mount Olympos in a four-horse chariot driven by Nike. He leaves a corselet behind on the pyre below him. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1952. 52.11.18.
CC0 1.0 UNIVERSAL (www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/254710).

[93] Shapiro 1983: 15–17.
[94] For example, the tale of Deianeira and Nessos and Herakles' death by poison has been traced to Aitolia; his cremation and transformation perhaps in the context of the Malian Gulf. See Holt 1989: 74, with further references.

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the hero-god developed over time and place, we are primarily interested here in the role of fire in these stories. In the context of other mythemes concerning fire, we can understand it as a crucial tool of transformation—apparently perceived as a way of burning away what is mortal, thus allowing what is immortal to come into being.[95] Here it seems to be adapted to the character of Herakles: the introduction of this mytheme of his arranging his own burning aligns with other tales about him vanquishing mortal death by his own actions. It is difficult not to read the account of his setting up the pyre as him arranging his own sacrifice. Indeed, in the *Trachiniai*, the details that Herakles gives to Hyllos can be described as 'basically ritual prescriptions'.[96] In the play, this is depicted not so much as a suicide:[97] Herakles is already burning, insofar as he is in agony from the effects of Nessos' poison. At this point, we see his character seem to change, he has previously been 'egocentric, brutally callous, violent to an extreme degree';[98] now he becomes a calmer, authoritative character, 'purposeful, resolute, and determined to take command of the situation as far as possible.'[99] While in the other tales fire is wielded by a divinity, either by a goddess or as the thunderbolt of a god, in line with his heroic nature, Herakles himself arranges for his body to be burned on the pyre. We seem to be witnessing the burning away of the troubling and troubled mortal body: the emergence, perhaps, of divinity.[100]

Looking back across the stories of these two sections, these stories of death and potential transformation, we see how fire is used to mark ontological difference between mortal and divine. Tales that encompass the imagery of sacrifice emphasize the vulnerability of mortal men and women in the face of fire. And yet this obliterating power can be reversed: fire *can* become an instrument of transfiguration. In the hands of the gods and hidden from human eyes, it may move mortals to a different ontological category, and it is clear from across these mythemes that something mortal must die in the process.

But what prompts these divine, fiery acts? Across these stories, as we have seen, dynamics of risk, secrecy, and deception surface repeatedly. But perhaps most striking is the presence of an emotion—that of envy. We see it between mortals, but most strikingly, these stories tell us of the envy of the gods—envy of each other and of each other's favourites, and envy towards mortal men and women, whose actions threaten ontological boundaries. And this leads us to ask whether envy not only prompts the use of fire, but in itself also conveys the experience of this most powerful of ancient emotions; the next examples will also raise this question.

[95] Cf. Shapiro 1983: 16.

[96] Holt 1989: 76, commenting on Soph. *Trach.* 1195–1201. Cf. Easterling 1982 ad loc.; see also Shapiro 1983: 16.

[97] Shapiro (1983: 16) raises the idea that suicide is foreign to, and shameful for, a Greek hero but it is not for Herakles.

[98] Easterling 1982: 6. [99] Holt 1989: 76. [100] Holt 1989: 76; Shapiro 1983: 16.

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The Hellotia and Daidala

While Herakles is, perhaps, the most well known of mythic characters commemorated by an annual fire-ritual—he is, it turns out, not the only one, as we will see in the final discussion of this case study. This concerns two rituals involving fire, which position women as objects both of and at risk: the Daidala, in which the representation of a woman was burned, and the Hellotia at Korinth, which tells of the deaths by fire of Korinthian girls, among them one Hellotis, with whose story we start.

The Hellotia

The myth of the Hellotia has come down to us in two versions given by the scholiast to Pindar *Olympian* 13—and it is possible that one or both of these versions reflect a different, later historical context than the origins of the cult to which they have become linked.[101] The scholiast gives a number of explanations for the origins of the festival: some of this aitiological material links the festival to Athena. One makes a connection to 'a marsh' (*elous*) in Marathon, where a temple of Athena was founded; another describes how the festival's name came from Athena 'taking' (*elein*) and bridling Pegasus, which may also have a reference to the sanctuary of Athena Chalinitis ('the Reiner') which Pausanias notes in his time.[102]

The two key stories concerning burning take place during the invasion of the Dorians and are about the four daughters, Hellotis, Eurytione, Chryse, and Kotyto, of the mythical king of Korinth, Timandros. The first account describes how, when the city was captured, Hellotis, the eldest daughter seized the youngest, Chryse, and went into the temple of Athena. Finding herself abandoned, she threw herself into the fire (it is not clear in this account what happens to Chryse). It then notes how purificatory sacrifices are therefore performed for the goddess, which came to be called the Hellotia of Aletes.[103] The second version describes the invasion of the Peloponnesians by the Dorians with the sons of Herakles; this time it is Eurytione and Hellotis who enter the temple, with the women of the city. The Dorians notice and attack them with fire. The others escape but the sisters are burned to death along with a child (Chryse?).[104] These events are followed by a plague, and the god—it is unclear if this is meant to be understood

[101] See Pind. *Ol.* 13.40, and schol. 56a–d (Drachmann 1903). The other aitiological myths are discussed in this section. On the Hellotia, see Furley 1981: 163–172, and Larson 1995: 138–139.

[102] Schol. Pind. *Ol.* 13.56a (Drachmann 1903): that it took its name from a marsh (*elous*) in Marathon, where a temple of Athena was founded. The first half of 56c and 56d: Athena Chalinitis; Paus. 2.4.5. This may be the temple referred to in the myth (which is not specified), see Broneer 1942: 140; but the apparent confusion of the festival with themes of horses and bridling is attributed by Furley (1981: 164) to a festival of Athene Alea called *Halotia* at Tegea, which was linked to the capture of many Lakedaimonians (Paus. 8.47.4).

[103] Furley (1981: 164) translates 'after the time of Aletes'; but see D'Alessio 2012: 51, n. 71.

[104] As suggested by D'Alessio 2012: 51, n. 70.

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as an oracle or an epiphany of Athena—says that this will continue until 'the souls' (*tas psychas*) of the maidens are propitiated, a temple is built to Athena Hellotis, and a festival called 'Hellotia' is inaugurated.

Before we analyse the role of fire in these stories, we should explore the uncertainties around this evidence. The connection of these myths to the festival of the Hellotia itself is far from clear. Some scholars have dismissed it altogether;[105] others are more sympathetic and see in the myth an earlier story or set of stories that have then been appropriated and rewritten with details that fit later events.[106] Before examining those details, we can turn to the possible material evidence for temple and festival. The so-called Sanctuary of the Sacred Spring is in the lower Lechaion Road valley: the early architecture of the site is difficult to date, but it includes a spring house, built probably by the end of the sixth century BCE, and an apsidal building, dating to the early fifth century, with a secret, as well as a conventional entrance.[107] There are also a number of 'chthonic' altars, that is, altars that are low to the ground, and myriad other sacred areas.[108] Underlying the structure of this site seems to have been an emphasis on access to water:[109] there is the spring house itself, as well as access to various wells around the sanctuary.

The site seems to have been a focus of cult for a long time: evidence for habitation dates sparsely from the sub-Mycenean period, with increasing numbers of graves found dating from the late Protogeometric–Geometric period, and a gradual separation over time of living habitation and burial of the dead, and then from secular to sacred.[110] The site was undergoing extensive changes well into the third century BCE, indicating its importance to the community.[111] The particular deities put forward as the recipients of the cult have been many, with no firm consensus reached.[112] The current prevailing view is that it was Athena Hellotis

[105] Broneer (1942: 141) dismisses the idea that the myth indicates that there was an early date for cult and festival, and concludes that the myth itself is of no historical interpretative value at all: 'The myth, at whatever time it assumed the form recorded by the scholiast, was not a new creation. It was made up of old legends which were refashioned and combined with tales of different localities, so as to fit the practices it was intended to explain. It is obvious that such a process would introduce elements which had no connection with Korinth or with the particular cult there associated with the myth.'

[106] Furley 1981: 171; and, as noted in the Introduction, Delattre (2009: chs. 37): 'Le mécanisme étiologique qui, dans ce récit, prend pour objet le rituel, se construit à la fois sur deux moments et sur deux thèmes, le feu et le déplacement, qui interviennent, séparés ou confondus, dans chacun des deux volets.'

[107] Williams 1978a: 105–111 (chronology), 96 (spring house); see also Kopestonsky 2016: 738 (apsidal building). Williams (1978a: 8) notes that the water source starts to be elaborated at the end of the seventh century.

[108] Williams 1978a: 114. The triglyph metope wall that marked the west side of the sanctuary is also unusually low to the ground, again suggesting chthonian cult (Sanders 2010: 373; but see Kopestonsky 2016: 733 for caution).

[109] Kopestonsky (2016) draws attention to the importance of water-based cults in Korinth, in particular as foci for worship of the nymphs; see 731–744 for the Sacred Spring site. She argues (742–743) that the rituals carried out at this site were nuptially focused.

[110] Williams 1978a: 2–17.

[111] Williams 1978a: 17.

[112] Dionysos (Bonner 1929: 371–374); Zeus Chthonios (de Waele 1932: 366–367). Artemis-Bendis (Herbert 1986: 33–35 and Sanders 2010: 370–374); Apollo, Ge and/or Dionysos (Elderkin 1941: 125–132).

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who was the focus of the cult, with Kotyto worshipped at the Sacred Spring,[113] although others have argued for a cult of the Nymphs at the site.[114] There is also significant evidence for what have been called 'cults of the dead' in the area, including the so-called Underground Shrine,[115] the Heroön at the Crossroads,[116] and the Stele Shrine,[117] largely evidenced as starting in the sixth century BCE, and in connection with (in two cases) much earlier burials.

Excavations at the sanctuary site, suggest other events were likely held at the festival: there is a racetrack, probably dating to the fifth century BCE,[118] and a raised platform that may have been the site of the ring for the *pankration*, along with wrestling and boxing matches. A number of small red-figure vessels with images of athletic events, including torch races, support these material remains.[119] Catherine Morgan links the development of this site with the decision by elites in

[113] Kotyto was worshiped with rites involving water, and there seems to have been a focus on this at the Sacred Spring site (as noted by Steiner 1992: 387).

[114] Williams 1978a: 42–45. For the argument regarding Kotyto, he turns to Hesychius *s.v.* 'Kotytō' (κ 3820), which describes Eupolis' play about Kotyto and is taken to refer to the *Baptai* ('Dippers' or 'Dyers'); see F93 (Storey 2011b). This argument has influenced Steiner's (1992: 402–406) interpretation of the surprising number of oil containers found at the Spring: in acknowledgement of the 'funerary aspect', Steiner suggests that the focus of cult was not Hellotis, but Kotyto (even though the myth suggests she did not burn). This suggestion is in part influenced by the arguments made by both Lisle 1955 and Williams 1978a that the site indicated ritual orgiastic dancing and immersion, similar to the rites of Kotyto in Athens. But these parallels need to be treated with caution: as Kopestonsky (2016: 740, n. 133) notes, the cult of Kotyto at Korinth may have been very different in nature from that at Athens. Steiner (1992: 404–405) acknowledges that similar assemblages have been found outside Korinth at the Korykian Cave sacred to Pan and the nymphs and the *Leōkorion* shrine in the Athenian Agora (also sacred to nymphs). Kopestonsky (2016: 741) also argues that this was a site for worship of the nymphs, possibly in conjunction with Artemis.

[115] The Underground Shrine is in the southern slope of the valley, near five Geometric graves (Williams and Fisher 1972: 145). Used during the sixth–fourth centuries BCE, the site's activities may have been connected to water, since a ramp that descends to the shrine also allows access to wells (Williams 1978a: 75; James 2019: 174). Broneer (1942: 144–145) speculated that the whole shrine 'was buried in earth and uncovered once a year at the time of the festival', a notion that would fit with an annual procession to propitiate the restless dead, especially if, as Broneer argues, it is also connected with ideas of purification using fire and water. But Williams (1978a: 70–72) notes that what was originally identified as the remains of an altar is now thought to be the pier to support a roof. The votive base inscribed with the name of *Artemis Korithos*, found in fill on the southeast side of the reset boundary wall, was not necessarily dedicated at this temenos (as Williams 1972: 153–154, n. 16).

[116] The Heröon of the Crossroads appears to have been formally enclosed around the last quarter of the sixth century (Williams 1978a: 12). It seems that it originally comprised four burials, albeit, apparently forgotten by the proto-Korinthian period (Williams 1978a: 79 argues that by then the roads had shifted to allow traffic to move over them). These included two males, a female and a child; in the late proto-Korinthian period, one of the adult male graves was opened and looted, and carefully closed, becoming a site of cult activity soon after (Williams 1978a: 80; Williams 1981: 410). While we might be able to identify the gender of an ancient skeleton, this would have been much harder for the Korinthians of this time; nor would the grave goods necessarily have helped: could this possibly have been seen as the site of the burial of a female?

[117] The Stele Shrine (now covered by Shop XXXIII in the South Stoa) also seems to have been established in the 570s or 60s and to have been a site of hero cult: Williams (1978b: 11) suggests that it was established 'in honor or in memory of a person connected with the overthrow of the Corinthian tyranny'.

[118] Williams 1978a: 12–13 describes its development.

[119] For an overview of the site of the Sacred Spring and history of its excavations see Williams 1978a: 88–136 and *passim*; Williams and Russell 1981: 2–21; Morgan 2007: 243–244; and D'Alessio 2012: 52.

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Korinth to commission epinician poetry—Pindar's *Olympian Ode* 13—revealing a significant association between athletics and what she calls 'the Korinthian civic image' of this period.[120] In addition, more recently, we can add that fragments of a mostly lost ode of Pindar's, seemingly in honour of victors in the *pankration* at the Hellotia festival, have since been found on a papyrus from Oxyrhynchos.[121] In terms of the myth itself, the fragments of the text of the *Ode* seem to mention, twice, Aletes, one of the invading Herakleidai descendants and the first Dorian king of Korinth.[122] Each time, the name is followed by a form of *Lakedaimoni[*. But rather than indicating the ethnic of the hero, it seems more likely that this reflected a contemporary link between Sparta and Korinth.[123]

Nevertheless, building on this, Giovan Battista D'Alessio has argued that the *aition* of the Hellotia dates back to the fifth century BCE, and that it may be possible that the scholia to *Olympian* 13 is attributing the foundation of the festival to Aletes.[124] While it is impossible to date the festival itself, examining the development of the versions of the myths may offer some insights into the contexts in which these stories were felt to be significant.[125] The stories of the girls tell individual experiences of conquest and their aftermath, exploring their consequences for the community. The juxtaposition of the two versions of the myths is intriguing: the scholiasts' accounts seem almost to build on each other. The first alludes to the problems caused by the deaths by including purificatory activities. The other unpacks the specifics of those problems and their solutions (plague, souls, propitiation), with these explanatory details suggesting a later date. Furley notes Nilsson's view that the first version (above) of the myth, in which Hellotis and her sister jump voluntarily into the flames, was most likely the earliest.[126]

We can trace something of a familiar narrative pattern in these stories: again we meet the mytheme of self-sacrifice, and the girls who die to save the city.[127]

[120] Morgan 2007: 246–247.

[121] *P.Oxy.* 2451 B Fr. 14; see D'Alessio 2012: 56–57 (appendix) for a transcription.

[122] As D'Alessio (2012: 52) notes, in one of these mentions, the 'Dorian' vocalism indicates that this was in this form in the original ode.

[123] D'Alessio 2012: 52.

[124] D'Alessio 2012: 52; he states (51) that the festival was known as '*Alētou Hellotia*', that is, the Hellotia of Aletes, basing this on an emendation of the last line of the first version of the story in the Pindaric scholia; others have taken the text as meaning 'after the time of Alētēs'.

[125] Furley 1981: 157–158, insofar as he interprets the myth of Hellotis as one that concerns the initiation of young girls, argues that this is paralleled by other initiation rituals that involved fire: the rites of Artemis at Patrai, which involved a holocaust of sacrificial animals (by associating it with the myths and rituals of the festival of Artemis Triclaria); the Kalydonian Boar, and the accompanying myth of Meleager; and the Stepterion Festival in which boys burned a tent. He argues that 'the cult myths associated with initiation rites of boys and girls…involved a threat of human sacrifice through invocation of a legendary ancestor(s)…Those myths were found to be salutary tales designed to instil a healthy awe in the young initiates of god's power and the need to keep in line.' But, in drawing out this aspect from the evidence, while he illuminates some valuable insights, he also elides significant differences between these events.

[126] Furley 1981: 166, citing Nilsson 1957: 95.

[127] For example, the Erechtheidai and Leokoridai discussed p. 85 and p. 86, respectively.

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But here, the ritual of sacrifice made to Hellotis (and her sisters) offers another elaboration of this narrative pattern: instead of commemorating their bravery, the cult is begun to alleviate a plague caused by their deaths.[128] Moreover, between the first and second versions of this story, we see the locus of responsibility for their deaths shift: what was an indigenous event becomes the fault of the invaders.[129] If we want to explore the possible context in which such a story, and such a shift in narrative emphasis, might seem relevant, then we can suggest that it may reflect circumstances in which drawing attention to the role of Dorians/Herakleidai as aggressors towards Korinth was felt to be increasingly appropriate.

The Bakkhiadai, the family that ruled Korinth from the eighth to the mid-seventh century BCE, claimed to be descended from the children of Herakles.[130] This might suggest that the more specific version of the myth emerged with their overthrow by the Kypselid tyrants—as early as the seventh century BCE. This also roughly aligns with the period of time when the sanctuary site first appears to be undergoing some initial development.[131] Could it be that these myths and associated rituals came into being as a response to the impacts of violence on this society—not only memorializing the dead, but also marking and making reparation for all the horrors of a civil war, and cleansing their community in the eyes of the gods? Material evidence might support this: no discrete votive deposits have been found, but the pottery evidence has been argued to have a peculiarly funerary character: indeed, the evidence, particularly for votive oil containers found at the site, seems to be of a type usually found in private, family-oriented funerary cult.[132] As has been argued, it may indicate a combining of family- and *polis*-based rituals of mourning, in a cult that was intended to commemorate and expiate deaths, the nature of which somehow threatened the city.[133] In this

[128] As Steiner (1992: 405) recognizes. Sanders (2010: 380) mentions the parallel but does not indicate the difference. Part of the problem this creates may have been their lack of a proper burial. Like the Lokrian maidens who in Lykophron's (*Alex.* 1141–1173) account of this ritual, were cremated 'with uncultivated wood and cast into the sea.'

[129] As Furley 1981: 171. [130] Paus. 2.4.3–4.

[131] Catherine Morgan has argued that the Hellotia and its associated myths may be indications of a more generally changing ideology at Korinth. This may be reflected in both texts and material evidence: poetry attributed to Eumelos, such as the lost *Korinthiaka*, which focuses on the royal genealogy of Korinth and the role of the Dorians; and the establishment of a shrine at the site of Solygeia, which may mark a mythical battle between Dorian invaders and native Aitolians (Morgan 1999: 414–415; Thuc. 4.42.2). She argues (415) that the Korinthians were thus reshaping both their mythology and the accompanying landscape to mark 'discontinuity and renewal', rather than continuity and tradition. Morgan does not indicate any doubt concerning the historical figure of Eumelos and his poetic output, but see West 2002 and Tsagalis 2017: 41–42. Besides, dating of this material is difficult: scholars have since argued that the *Korinthiaka* is likely to date to the middle or late sixth century BCE (West 2002: 109; Tsagalis 2017: 90–94), while evidence indicates that the site at Solygeia was founded in the eighth century BCE and apparently abandoned at the end of the sixth century BCE (Morgan 1999: 414). But even if these parallels cannot be neatly aligned, nevertheless, each may suggest an attempt to crystallize the mythical events that were deemed important to the inhabitants of the region at a particular time.

[132] Steiner 1992: 402–406. [133] Steiner 1992: 406.

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context, perhaps the stories that we find in the myths offered a particular focus for a cult of the dead.

Possibly supporting this argument are the many figurines and articulated female figures that have also been found in impressive numbers at the site.[134] Articulated figurines are more likely to have been dolls than statuary, although we should perhaps not draw a strict boundary between these two domains,[135] and we have evidence that articulated figurines were buried with girls or young women.[136] Perhaps this was what these dedications represented: either toys for the myth's dead girls, or perhaps the girls themselves. From the story, the daughters of Timandros were not yet married: they were still of an age when dolls would have been important to them. It may also be possible to connect them to the ritual activities at the site: if, as Larson has argued, such dolls were articulated so that they could dance or hold castanets (*krotala*) or tambourines (*tumpana*), they may have emulated the dancers of a chorus.[137] Some indications of such choral activity have also been traced by D'Alessio in the commentary on the lost Hellotian ode of Pindar.[138] It may be that these dolls and their dedication, along with these accompanying stories, are evidence for a ritual of initiation for young women—a nuptial festival or coming of age ritual.[139] But, again, others have argued that the dolls were involved in rituals of expiation: we hear from Seleukos via Athenaeus that there may have been a procession at the festival, in which an enormous wreath made of myrtle was carried; the wreath contained the bones of Europa, also called Hellotis.[140] And it has been suggested that, in parallel with the festival of the Daidala (as we will see), puppets were carried in this wreath, and perhaps burned, replicating the burning of the girls.[141]

[134] Kopestonsky (2016: 737) notes that these were found 'throughout the area' rather than from a distinct or particular deposit; but does not note which area. Davidson (1952: 13) observes that they are found in considerable numbers, and were made in the Potters' Quarter (see Stillwell 1952: 145–151), but then denies that they were likely to be used as votives since 'not one was discovered in a deposit'; while this does not conform with the details of no. 131, a jointed doll dating to the late fifth century BCE, which is listed as found in Deposit XI (Davidson 1952: 33), it is the case that the contexts of Deposit XI are described as unlikely to be from a votive deposit (Ibid.: 18). Thompson (1943) suggests that these kinds of dolls may have had apotropaic use.

[135] Larson 2001: 102–103. [136] Larson 2001: 105–106. [137] Larson 2001: 106.

[138] D'Alessio (2012: 53) interprets l. 29 of the commentary as 'they sing before the altar', and he suggests that 'cultic songs were evoked at the beginning of the ode, quite probably those that accompanied the expiatory rites of the Hellotia'.

[139] As Kopestonsky 2016: 742–743.

[140] Athen. *Deipn.* 15.678a–b. After the description of the ritual, Seleukos or Athenaeus add that this occurred at Korinth. Furley (1981: 167) translates the Greek as meaning that the Hellotia 'were held also in Corinth', taking the initial description as an account of the festival of Hellotis in Gortyn, Krete, although Krete is not mentioned in the text. This seems to be because of the information that Hellotis is another name for Europa, which was the case in the Kretan festival. Broneer (1942: 140) argues that this may have been the origin of the cult in Korinth; in Marathon, a sanctuary and sacrifices (*LSCG* 20) are attested. The identification of Europa as Hellotis is explained by the *Etym. Mag. s.v.* Hellotia.

[141] Nilsson 1957: 95. Furley (1981: 167) disagrees and argues that it was more likely that animal sacrifices were held in honour of the girls, following the examples of other festivals of Athena Hellotia, for example, in fourth century Tetrapolis, where Athena Hellotia received a cow and every other year a sheep.

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We cannot say with certainty that the dolls on this site were burned and plunged into the water to mirror the myth;[142] nor can we date the myth, or identify, for certain, the divinities who were worshipped on this site. The puzzling material evidence for the ritual and the curious accompanying myths rather demonstrate how both myth and ritual respond dynamically to political and social contexts, and illustrate the difficulties of integrating these two elements.[143] Nevertheless, the evidence from the Sanctuary of the Sacred Spring reveals a familiar network of narrative elements to conjure with, including women and fire, destruction and/or transformation. As we will see, the next example offers us all these elements yet again.

The Daidala

The earliest evidence for the Daidala dates to the Imperial period: Pausanias tells us that there was both a Great Daidala, a pan-Boiotian festival, which was celebrated every sixty years; and a more frequent Little Daidala, held at Plataia, the timing of which is uncertain, although it was possibly an annual festival.[144] He gives an account of both the rituals and an associated myth. A fragment of Plutarch in turn provides two further versions of the myth, offered as explanations of the origins of the festival(s).[145] In what follows I explore the evidence for the ritual and the versions of the myth, and then consider what we understand about their contexts.

Pausanias provides his information about the Daidala to explain the presence of a seated statue of Hera *Nympheuomenē*, ('Betrothed'); this stands beside a huge standing statue representing Hera *Teleia* ('Married') in the temple of Hera, in Plataia. As modern observers, it helps us to understand what would have been more obvious to Pausanias' original audience: these two Hera cult-statues of this sanctuary—Hera *Nympheuomenē* and Hera *Teleia*, marking, first, betrothal, then marriage—would have been perceived as relating to two different stages in a woman's life, and so in her relationship with the gods.[146]

[142] Larson (1995: 139) states that Broneer (1942: 158) refers to such a treatment of these figurines in his analysis of the site, but in fact he is drawing on burned material found in the water tank, and describing what he thinks probably happened during ritual activity at the fountain of Glauke, and drawing a parallel between the two Korinthian cults.

[143] Chaniotis 2002: 24 on the Daidala.

[144] Pausanias states that he has been told by a guide that it happens every six years (9.3.3) but claims that it occurs at a shorter interval. He explains that despite wanting to do this, he was unable to calculate the interval between one Daidala and the next. The issue is discussed by a number of scholars; see Chaniotis 2002: 24, with citations.

[145] Paus. 9.3.1–8; Plut. F156 (Sandbach 1969). That there was interest in this festival in antiquity is shown by the fact that Plutarch wrote a book about it. As Sandbach (1969: 282–283) notes, the myth details are presented as offering Stoic-like physical doctrines, in which Hera = earth/air, Zeus = fire, Apollo = the sun; but since Plutarch himself did not hold these views, it was probably given by a character appearing in a dialogue.

[146] For another set of cult statues of Hera demonstrating this graduation of status, we can compare Pausanias' report (8.22.2) of the story of the Heras at Stymphalos, Arkadia, which included Hera *Pais*, *Teleia*, and *Xēra* (Hera 'Child', Hera 'Married', Hera 'Widowed').

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To explain why Hera is called 'Betrothed', Pausanias first provides a detailed description of the organization of a ritual: the Daidala. There was a Little Daidala, in which the Plataians created the wooden images that would be required at the larger festival. This involved a visit to the oak grove, near Alalkomenai, in which they laid out portions of boiled flesh. They watched for the crows (and only the crows), looking out for one that took a chunk of meat and settled on a tree to consume it. This was the tree they cut down and turned into the so-called *daidalon*. At the Greater Daidala, fourteen of those images were distributed by lot to Plataians, Koronaians, Thespians, Tanagraians, Chaironeians, Orchomenians, Lebadeians, and Thebans; for the others, it appears that there may have been some kind of payment involved, since we hear that the smaller *poleis* had to 'pool their funds' to purchase these images. A lottery was used again to identify positions in the *pompē* or 'procession', which went from the River Asopos to the summit of Kithairon. In a wagon in this procession was an image—presumably one left over from the distribution of images among the participants—of 'a bridesmaid'. On Kithairon, the participants created a wooden 'building' and an altar: magistrates sacrificed cows to Hera and bulls to Zeus. Individuals also sacrificed—the wealthy gave 'what they wish', the less wealthy, smaller animals—and the whole thing, animals and altar, was then consumed in a fire that followed.

Pausanias explains these activities in a myth that is firmly rooted in the local topography: Hera, angry with Zeus for some unspecified offence, takes refuge in Euboia. Kithairon advises Zeus to create a wooden image, wrap it up, place it in a wagon drawn by bullocks and announce that he is celebrating marriage to Asopos' daughter, Plataia. Hera when she hears this, immediately confronts Zeus, discovers the deception and is reconciled. The image is burnt: Pausanias says that this is done simply to commemorate this reconciliation.[147]

Two further versions of the myth are given by Plutarch. The second version is similar to that of Pausanias: Hera goes to Mount Kithairon and Zeus seeks the advice of Alalkomenes. The trick is developed: an oak-tree is dressed as a bride, which they call Daidale; Hera in distress confronts Zeus. At the end of the myth, Plutarch describes an emotionally more complicated scenario, in which Hera, founding the festival, and honouring the wooden image, still 'burnt it up, lifeless though it was, in her jealousy.'[148] This is Plutarch's second version, which he describes as being 'more foolish' than the other. In the first version he gives, Hera has been carried away by Zeus and hidden in the area:[149] when Hera's nurse comes to find her, Kithairon distracts her by saying that Zeus is canoodling with the goddess, Leto—so Hera escapes discovery. In the ritual, it seems, this act of deception is remembered with a preliminary sacrifice to Leto 'of the corner/shadows' or 'of the night'. No explicit mention is made of the *daidalon*. Plutarch notes

[147] Paus. 9.3.1–2. [148] Plut. F157.6 (trans. Sandbach 1969).
[149] Plut. F157.3 (Sandbach 1969).

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that some say that Hera was given the name 'Leto of the Night', because of her secret dalliance with Zeus; and it is later, when the marriage becomes public, which happens first on Kithairon and at Plataia, that she gains the name Hera *Teleia* and Hera *Gamelion* ('of Wedlock').[150]

Many different analyses of this ritual have been put forward; I agree with Frontisi-Ducroux that the evidence indicates that the *daidalon/daidala* do not, as earlier scholars have argued, represent the goddess Hera, nor any other god.[151] Nor does the myth lend itself well to an explanation involving 'a scapegoat', or rather *pharmakos* ritual—as these have been generally understood by scholars.[152] The story itself contains no indication that an act of sacrilege has been committed—there is no crime to be rectified or community suffering that must be averted. Rather, the story describes the log as beautified because of the role it will play, both in the myth as counterfeit bride to Zeus /Plataia, and in its real-world role as a dedication or sacrifice to the two gods.[153] In that respect, then, this can be understood as a sacrifice to the gods—one that is, as is usual with gods, intended to maintain their beneficence towards mortals, and appease any possible concerns. So, perhaps rather than asking *whom* the sacrifice is meant to represent, we should turn our attention to what it represents within the narrative.

Here is a story set firmly in its eponymous landscape: in his first version, Plutarch mentions (as does Pausanias) Kithairon, and Plataia; in his second version, Hera goes to Mount Kithairon and Zeus seeks the advice of Alalkomenes, which is similar to the name of the local grove, in which the ritual of tree selection takes place, in Pausanias' account of the ritual. These local figures have supported the King of the gods in achieving his goal—to deceive and seduce Hera. Indeed, they had to do so, in order to make the world safe—as Plutarch says when he closes his account by focusing on how the eventual union of Hera and Zeus will help to avert natural disasters in the region, brought about by their discord.[154] But the process of doing so is also replete with risks, turning on activities that are both deceitful and secret. These stories, I would argue, prompt reflection not only on maintaining harmony between the gods, but also on deceit and its role in relationships, between gods and between mortals and gods. And, in that context, we can better understand the sacrifice of

[150] See Furley 1981: 201–202 on how Plutarch's and Pausanias' stories relate.

[151] Frontisi-Ducroux 1975: 211.

[152] On the *pharmakos*/scapegoat confusion in classical scholarship, see Eidinow 2022, drawing on Douglas 2004: esp. 40–41. For example, Chaniotis (2002: 35) has described the burning of the *daidalion* as 'a sacrifice of propitiation which recalls, e.g., the sacrifice of Iphigeneia, the king's daughter (cf. Plataia, the daughter of king Kithairon) who dressed as bride walks to her death to atone for her father's sacrilege.' Eliding the structures of propitiation and scapegoat narratives, Chaniotis reflects that 'The treatment of the *daidala* is characterized by an ambivalence that has been observed in mythological reflections of scapegoat rituals (e.g., the myth of Polykrite of Naxos): something selected because of its beauty is decorated and cast out and destroyed as threatening and harmful.'

[153] Chaniotis 2002: 35.

[154] Plut. F157.7.

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the *daidalon/daidala*.[155] In all these versions, the figure that enabled Zeus' deception is clothed as a woman: but the doll not only represents that figure, it can be described as representing the very act of deception itself. It is through the burning of that doll and everything it represents that the trick is both recognized, replayed—and resolved—and, for a brief period at least, mortals, in this landscape, can hope for divine harmony.

This theme of deceit becomes a powerful leitmotif for Pausanias' account of the myth and ritual in its 'real-world' political context, as well. Let us go back to the landscape that Pausanias evokes: the river Asopos can be described as the origin of this ritual, in terms of both its topography, and its story. It is the name of both a king and of a river; and in his analysis of this claim, we see the subtle artistry of Pausanias as he tells us the myth, and then rationalizes it, expressing careful doubt that Plataia was the daughter of a river rather than a king.[156] This careful interweaving of tales means that, even as a more reasoned version of the story is preferred, the audience is still left with the idea that Plataians are mythically rooted in this landscape. As we will see, this is a subtle, but crucial framing for what is to follow: not only an account of a ritual, but of the political nexus in which it takes place.

With this established, Pausanias takes us swiftly into an account of the exiles of the Plataians: in the first, their suffering at the hands of the Spartans is dealt with rapidly;[157] far more detail is given to the second exile, in which the Thebans betrayed the Plataians.[158] From there we enter the landscape itself, a landscape that is replete with ruins—of sanctuaries and spaces, whose sacred quality can now only be outlined by the ghostly tellings of past myths. First, we reach the ruins of Hysiai and Erythrai: Pausanias describes how these were once cities of Boiotia, and that 'even at the present day among the ruins of Hysiai are a half-finished temple of Apollo and a sacred well' as if the building had been suddenly stopped by some sudden, shocking event. It seems that even the divine quality of the landscape is being erased: there is a Boiotian story that in past time, oracles were obtained from the well by drinking from it. The knowledge of this powerful traditional past is fading, and this extends to the stories of the landscape itself: 'Where on Cithaeron the disaster befell Pentheus, the son of Echion, or where Oedipus was exposed at birth, nobody knows…'[159] In contrast,

[155] Frontisi-Ducroux (1975: 215) places emphasis on the role of the personifications—Kithairon, Alalkomeneos—in supporting Zeus to create this deception so that he can either lure Hera to him or keep her safely hidden from her nurse; she sees them as early versions of Daidalos, the master-craftsman of early Greek myth.

[156] Paus. 9.1.2. [157] Paus. 9.1.4. [158] Paus. 9.1.4–7.

[159] Paus. 9.2.1 (Hysiae and oracle); 9.2.4 (myths no one knows). As he leaves Plataia, he notes again (9.4.4) the surrounding ruins, and among them the temple of Demeter and Kore, which is not finished, with incomplete images of the goddesses.

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Pausanias provides snippets of information regarding the role of Plataia in the Persian war:[160]

> The Plataians have also a sanctuary of Athena surnamed Warlike; it was built from the spoils given them by the Athenians as their share from the battle of Marathon. It is a wooden image gilded, but the face, hands and feet are of Pentelic marble. In size it is but little smaller than the bronze Athena on the Acropolis, the one which the Athenians also erected as first-fruits of the battle at Marathon; the Plataians too had Pheidias for the maker of their image of Athena.

Here, the surviving evidence is being used to record a different, more recent set of stories—but the implication of Pausanias' narrative seems to be that these stories of historical achievements may yet prove as ephemeral as the regional myths that can no longer be recalled.

In the midst of these ruins and half-remembered stories, Pausanias' account of the Daidala is, then, strikingly detailed. In his telling of its myth, the theme of reconciliation stands out strongly; it is about overcoming hostility and conflict. Its central theme is enacted by the Thebans, whose wish to join in the ritual is marked by Pausanias, who also reminds us of the rebuilding of Thebes by Kassander and draws attention to this as a time when the Thebans wished to share in the common assembly.[161] And yet, perversely, the effect, in this context, may be to also remind the reader of all those times when in fact the Thebans did not wish to join the Plataians. Moreover, it brings to mind Pausanias' views about Thebes expressed earlier in the work; in particular, how it has shrunk from its former might. In Pausanias' account, Boiotian Thebes stands alongside Mycenae and Ninevah as examples of how 'all things, strong or weak, increasing or decreasing, are being changed by Fortune, who drives them with imperious necessity according to her whim.'[162] That sense of the cycle of Fortune is also apparent in his narration of the ritual, which is not described as having been resurrected after the return of the Plataians. It is rather as if the ritual cycle—and the ongoing relations of those who celebrate it—had not, could not be stopped, only paused.

The river Asopos not only marks the origin of the Plataians and starting point of the ritual, as Pausanias tells us, it also marks the boundary between Plataia and Thebes.[163] This landscape is expanded as a riskscape by Pausanias' discussion of the Daidala, which offers a larger meditation on political relationships in this

[160] Paus. 9.4.1 with further details given in 9.4.1–3.
[161] Paus. 9.3.6.
[162] Paus. 8.33.1–4; quotation Paus. 8.33.1 (trans. Jones 1918). This reflection, although it comes late in the work, offers a further illumination: as James Porter (2001: 73) puts it, 'The workings of fortune are in some sense the true subject of his ten books'.
[163] Paus. 9.4.4. On the foundations in myth of the tension between Thebes and Boiotia, see Fowler, *EGM* 1: 354–355.

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region. It might then seem puzzling to a modern mind that all of this reflection on military and political matters comes attached, as it were, to the presence of a statue of Hera. But here, again, we find the interrelationship of religion, region, landscape, and politics: Pausanias describes Hera *Teleia* cults, in other city states, in two other settings. We have mentioned one already, Stymphalos; the other is Megalopolis.[164] As with the Daidala, each of these contexts also includes a description of some kind of attempt at a political alliance, although in these cases, they have gone badly wrong. Megalopolis—a symbol of the Arkadian League—was 'founded…with the utmost enthusiasm amidst the highest hopes of the Greeks, but it has lost all its beauty and its old prosperity, being to-day for the most part in ruins.'[165] As if to reflect this, Megalopolis' sanctuary of Hera *Teleia* stands outside the city and is in ruins;[166] a little later in this passage, it becomes part of Pausanias' reflection on Fortune, and, as we have seen, there it is explicitly related to Boiotian Thebes. In turn, Stymphalos is no longer considered an Arkadian city, he tells us, but instead belongs to the Argive league;[167] again, the sanctuaries of Hera, including Hera *Teleia*, though fabled, are no longer to be found.[168] As Maria Pretzler has observed, Stymphalos was a city in decline: she notes that Pausanias does not mention this, but rather provides 'a favourable representation' of the site.[169] But the silences, the unfindable, the ruined and the disappeared are as important to a reading of Pausanias as those things he describes in detail. The lack of these Hera cults, which related so obviously to the lifecycle of that community's women, offers a tacit comment on its political health.

Turning back to the Daidala, we can trace a similar set of implicit messages lurking in Pausanias' narrative, like his description of Leto in the shadows. At the beginning of his account, Pausanias expresses some doubt about some of the details of the story that he hears, and describes his own inability to locate the truth about the timing of the ritual.[170] These difficulties are not signs of inadequate research, but a form of explicit, even marked, vagueness that offers an important signal of how to read his account.[171] As James Porter has noted, they offer insights into Pausanias' ideology, in particular, perhaps, his focus on loss.[172] In his telling of the Daidala myths this motif is powerful; but Pausanias also interweaves the different emotional themes of these stories to evoke a powerful, allusive narrative about the present. The landscape is reshaped by half-heard, half-forgotten stories of divine secrecy and envy, commemorated in a ritual of burning. The Daidala's celebrants come together, in the shadow of their shared and violent history, to celebrate the transformation of deception.

[164] Paus. 8.31.9. [165] Paus. 8.33.1 (trans. Jones 1918). [166] Paus. 8.31.9.
[167] Paus. 8.22.1. [168] Paus. 8.22.3. [169] Pretzler 2007: 93. [170] Paus. 9.3.1–3.
[171] Elsner (1992: 23–24) notes how such expressions of uncertainty about rituals tend to occur when Pausanias is marking the difference between an initiated viewer and an ordinary person.
[172] Porter 2001: 75: they are the fulfilment of Pausanias' ideology and of his text.

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Exchange Revisited: Thetis

As we started with Pandora, we end with Thetis: from a woman created by the gods as punishment for mortals, to a goddess/nymph whose potential power set the gods to panic. The story of Thetis is well known: it has already been discussed in this volume in the case study, Earth and she will be mentioned again in the case study, Water. Here, we briefly revisit Thetis' changes, because, in some versions, this water goddess reveals her potential to become fire.[173] The particular moment of metamorphosis occurs when Peleus takes hold of her. She has been promised to him by Zeus; some stories say this is her punishment for resisting the king of the gods as a favour to Hera.[174] In other versions, Poseidon and Zeus both want her, but cease to quarrel over her when they learn that it is foretold she will have a son who is greater than his father.[175] When Peleus physically seizes her, in her attempt to get away she transforms herself repeatedly, moving from one entity to another, including, in some accounts, fire. In this fleeting moment, we may glimpse the extraordinary potency that Thetis demonstrates, before it is subdued by Peleus as part of the greater cosmological plan.

We recognize in Thetis' story some of the themes familiar from that of Pandora. Both are female figures who present a risk and who are therefore themselves at risk. Pandora is a 'gift' between gods and men, in fact a punishment for the theft of fire; Thetis plays a similar role, insofar as she is presented as a gift by Zeus to Peleus, ostensibly for his piety; but she is the one being punished.[176] Pandora is an instrument of the gods, a secret weapon—she is not what she at first appears. Thetis is also a secret weapon: she has the capacity to bear a child greater than his father, but that potential, and her role as a force for conflict, is diverted, through her marriage to Peleus.[177] Where Pandora brings evils to mortals, we can observe how Thetis also brings misery by means of her child Achilles, who, as Pindar puts it:[178]

> …bloodied the vine-clad
> plain of Mysia
> with the dark drops of Telephos' gore,
> he bridged a return home
> for the Atreidai and rescued Helen,
> after cutting out Troy's sinews with his spear; they
> had previously checked him
> from marshalling the work

[173] Pind. *Nem.* 4.62; Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.13.5; see case study Earth, p. 59.
[174] Hes. *Catalogue of Women* F151 (Most 2018b).
[175] Pind. *Isthm.* 8.38–41.
[176] Pind. *Nem.* 5.34–39.
[177] Pind. *Isthm.* 8.26–48.
[178] Pind. *Isthm.* 8.49–55a (trans. Race 1997).

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of man-slaying battle in the plain: proud
and mighty Memnon, Hector, and other champions,
to whom Achilles, guardian of the Aeacidae,
showed the house of Persephone

We gain a sense of Thetis' power as she shifts shape in Peleus' arms: she is like Pandora, an object of exchange between mortals and immortals, a figure both of risk and at risk. But whereas Pandora is a dumb, passive object of ritual exchange for stolen fire, we see Thetis, among her rollicking transformations, resisting her role in this exchange, and becoming that fire herself. Deception and revelation, destruction and/or transformation: fire and women come together in these narratives to mark and to blur, to conceal and to reveal ontological boundaries between mortals and gods.

Conclusion: 'Fight'

Two figures bookend this case study: Pandora, a woman, sent to man in deception, for stealing fire from the gods; and Thetis, a goddess herself, who becomes fire to prevent a man, sent by the gods, from stealing her power. The fire-focused myths and related rituals discussed in between play with similar themes—secrecy, deception, fire, and women—to explore the boundaries between mortals and gods. Repeatedly, the protagonists of these stories are revealed as figures at risk, and figures of risk for their families and communities, as they cross, or threaten to cross, or, indeed, are forced to cross the crucial boundary between mortal and god—and enter a state of *miasma* or *agos,* that is, of pollution or sacrality.

In the stories of Demophon, Meleager, and Achilles, fire is both an instrument of divine power and a force that grants divine power. Wielded by women, mortal and divine, it is held as a secret that, when revealed, leads to mortal vulnerability and/or destruction. Mortals cannot bear this divine fire: it consumes Semele when she seeks to view Zeus; while, for Asklepios and Herakles, it destroys their mortal aspects before they are transformed to a new ontological status. Finally, in the myths that underpin the Hellotia and Daidala festivals, deception, destruction, and transformation play out in different but powerful ways. In the first, those who are destroyed by fire may have been transfigured into local gods of rare and lasting power; in the second, the burning of the figure of a woman, which represents deception and secrecy, achieves the harmony of the gods.

A dynamic of secrecy and revelation underpins these narratives: they crackle—with duplicity, transgression, and deceit—until, in a climactic conflagration, there is destruction, and, sometimes, transformation. A number of emotions stand out: envy is a key dynamic of a number of tales, from that of Semele, whose path to destruction is shaped (in different versions) by the envy of Hera, Zeus, and her

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own; to Herakles' and Asklepios' life histories, each shaped, or rather distorted, from birth to death, by the envy of different gods. Herakles and Asklepios are also themselves agents of transgressions against the gods—Herakles has murdered his children and Asklepios has brought people back from the dead (as does Salmoneus, also destroyed by a thunderbolt).

When we turn to the stories of Meleager, Demophon, and Achilles, we trace evidence for other strong emotions: Althaia's extreme grief for her family; Demeter's anger at being disturbed at her transformation of Demophon; and perhaps a similar anger drives Thetis from the family home when she is discovered holding Achilles in the fire. The stories associated with the Hellotia and Daidala, suggest, on the one hand, the horror and terror of conflict; and, on the other hand, the threat of divine anger and, again, the envy of the gods. And anger and envy also meet in our bookend tales: the punishment of envious mortals by an envious Zeus, through the creation of Pandora; while Thetis avoids the envy of Hera by refusing Zeus' advances, only to meet with his anger. Finally, Thetis' own anger is, perhaps, evident in her transformation into fire.

As well as describing the intense emotional experiences of their characters, I suggest that these narrative patterns would also have had, and indeed continue to have, a more intuitive resonance for their audiences. If we look back, then, to the case study Earth, we saw the imagery of petrification evoke an experience of being frozen, immobile, rooted; something like what, in the trauma literature, has been called the physiological response of 'fright'. In the case study Air, some of the stories conveyed extreme episodes of dissociation, akin to those found in 'flag' or 'faint' responses to trauma. Turning, here, to the role of destructive or transformative fire, I suggest that some of these stories also evoke an embodied experience of extreme emotion: the 'fight' response. These descriptions of burning, I suggest, convey a recognizable response to traumatic events that manifests as an overwhelming urge to 'fight' against a danger that threatens. This occurs when escape has become impossible, and the body's systems reach a tremendous level of activation, in order to confront the danger. Breathing becomes faster and deeper, blood pressure rises, blood flow to heart and muscles increases; the body perspires more, palms moisten—and any physical activity that is not needed, stops. But when the body has reached the height of arousal, then in response to the stress, the body begins to shut-down, losing the capacity to speak, to move, to feel.[179]

In the stories that evoke such experiences, we see the protagonist changed by their ordeal. Thetis offers the clearest example, as she struggles to escape the mortal to whom she has been given, she herself becomes fire. The mortal body of Herakles is consumed by a fire he himself creates in order to stop his physical

[179] Schauer and Elbert 2010: 112.

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pain; he comes to occupy an ambiguous status between mortal and god. In turn, in one version of their tale, the young women of Korinth, facing their oncoming enemies, throw themselves into the fire by which they are destroyed; they are commemorated in the Hellotia, and may also have acquired cult. These are stories with a familiar pattern in which a protagonist is transformed by their experience. Here, they confront a situation that they cannot escape—they are stimulated to act—and in that confrontation become fire/are consumed by fire and transformed.

But these last two stories of the Hellotia and Herakles raise a different emotional dimenstion: they also have alternative versions in which the fire that transforms the protagonists is wielded by another. In those versions, Herakles is blasted by a divine thunderbolt wielded by Zeus, while the young women of Korinth are burned by their enemies, the Dorians. And we can trace this reversal of the usual pattern of transformation in others of the stories we have examined in this case study. Thus, Semele, Salmoneus, and Asklepios, trespassing on divine matters, are consumed by the fire of Zeus; Althaia's grief leads not to her own transformation, as we have seen and will see in other myths, but rather to the annihilation of her son, Meleager; and, similarly, in one version, at least, Demophon is destroyed by Demeter's fire. In turn, the story of Achilles reverses this dynamic of destruction: held, as a baby, in a fire created by his mother, Thetis, it is he who becomes fabled for his *mēnis* or 'enduring wrath.'[180] In these stories, rather than effecting a metamorphosis for the individual who feels an intense emotion—the outrage of Zeus, the grief of Althaia, the anger of Demeter and of Thetis—the power of that response moves outwards, to affect—to destroy or to transform—the recipient. Here are tales that seem to convey something more like our modern understanding of rage, and it is overwhelming, uncontrollable, devastating to those who spark it.[181]

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[180] Achilles' wrath: Hom. *Il.* 1.1. For the use of fire imagery as communicating a destructive force, we can also compare descriptions of Paris as a firebrand: the image is regularly attested in Lykophron's *Alexandra* (see 86 with Hornblower 2022 ad Lyk. *Alex.* 86–89), but it is first attested in Eur. *Tro.* 922 (and was also possibly in the prologue to the *Alexandros*, see *TrGF* 5.1, pp. 174–177).

[181] Parker Hall 2009: 84–96.

4
Water

Introduction: Remembrance and Rebirth

Across this volume, I have, so far, examined narrative patterns that recur across mythic tales, looking at the different elements with which they engage. These stories of embodied experience (female and male) take us beyond a simple moment of transformation and allow us, instead, to glimpse a nexus of mortal, divine, and landscape, which, in turn, raises questions about the boundaries between ancient (and modern) concepts of the human, non-human, and more-than-human. A crucial part of these stories of boundary-crossing, I have argued, is the role of emotions: I have suggested parallels between the embodied experiences of the transformations reported in these stories, and our own individual experiences, drawing on modern accounts of responses to intense emotions and traumatic events, and highlighting ways in which the stories of Earth, Air, and Fire may be viewed in terms of 'fright', 'flag' or 'faint', and 'fight' responses. In this fourth and final case study, the theme of boundaries and emotions comes to the foreground. We turn to the role of water in Greek myths about death and metamorphosis, and explore, first, those men and women whose transformations include, or are variously related to, becoming or marking local freshwater springs or rivers; and, secondly, those whose transformations are related to the sea.

As we explore the meanings of Greco-Roman myths that relate to water, we are reminded of how myth and reality are intertwined. Water's essential role in human survival and community development, cannot be overestimated, and in the ancient world, as now, different kinds of water—local rivers, springs, the sea—played a variety of fundamental roles in daily lives, which, in turn, shaped the meaning of water in the cultural and symbolic imagination. 'The sea' was a central and multivalent presence: crucial for travel and trade, from Homer's Odyssey onwards, it is depicted as both a source of risk, and as a potential route to riches, material or intellectual—or, as we shall see—the endowment of more-than-human powers.[1] In turn, access to sufficient fresh water was always a concern and could lead to inter-community friction,[2] while local rivers and springs offered a fundamental expression of local identity. Indeed, they were often

[1] Inspiring discussions of the range and depth of ancient Greek attitudes to the sea can be found in Bourriot 1972; Purves 2010; and Beaulieu 2016a.

[2] Friction leading to war: Thuc. 5.65.4 (Tegea and Mantineia) with Hornblower 2008: 172; Gallant 1991: 46, 56–57 on responses to lack of water in agriculture; and see Cole 2004: 7–29.

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Figure 4.1 Archaic terracotta vase in the form of a head of Acheloos, *c.* 550–525 BCE, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Rogers Fund, 1906. 06.1021.33. CC0 1.0 UNIVERSAL (www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/247206).

understood as personified living beings: springs often as female, usually conceived of as nymphs; and rivers as male, often depicted, visually, in the form of a bull, an image that conveyed their potential to be violent and destructive (Figure 4.1).[3]

Hesiod, as he describes the genealogies of the gods, notes how men know the names of their local rivers, even if they do not know the names of all the rivers.[4] We see this close relationship played out in various descriptions of individuals returning to their local lands;[5] while local heroes and heroines were often related to particular bodies of water, either as the water itself or through some other relationship, such as being conceived beside it.[6] Rivers flowed throughout people's lives, not only in their daily needs, but also symbolically, in terms of significant

[3] See Campbell 2012: 152 on the distinction between springs and rivers in artistic depictions, and 150–159 on the history and particular characteristics of these depictions.
[4] Hes. *Theog.* 369–370.
[5] Hom. *Od.* 13.352–360; Eur. *Bacch.* 5; Soph. F911 (Lloyd-Jones 1996). See Cole 2004: 27 for discussion and further examples.
[6] Larson 2001: 98.

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rituals; for example, dedicating a lock of hair to a river was a widespread ritual that marked a change in age and social status for both young men and women.[7] Hesiod, in his poem *Works and Days*, notes the need to pray and wash one's hands in the water of any river that one crossed.[8]

The fundamental role of water—both salt and fresh—in life is signified in the ancient imaginary in a range of different kinds of texts. In myth, we find Okeanos, the great body of water born of Ouranos and Gaia ('Heaven' and 'Earth'), according to Hesiod.[9] In that same poem, Okeanos is described as father of all the Oceanid nymphs and the rivers of the earth.[10] In the *Iliad* we are told that he is the source of all rivers, seas, and the many springs and deep wells;[11] and he also marks the geographical limit or boundary of the earth.[12] Okeanos' own nature, salt water or fresh, is unclear;[13] but, then, these were not considered to be so different in ancient times, when salt water was perceived to be fresh water that had been flavoured by contact with the earth.[14] In a famous passage, which is often used to discuss his approach to research,[15] Herodotos protests about the idea of Okeanos' existence;[16] nevertheless, it remains a steadfast aspect of ancient Greek cosmology. Thus, Plato incorporates the flow of Okeanos into his account of the many winding rivers that coil around and within the edges of the earth.[17]

Such ideas may have originated in travellers' stories about the seas beyond the Mediterranean;[18] and others have shown that the source of many of the ideas about the nature and role of Okeanos is Near Eastern.[19] This includes some indications that Okeanos was viewed as the origin of all things. This does not seem to be the case in Hesiod's *Theogony*, where that role rather seems to belong to Chaos[20]—although he does make Okeanos the father of river gods as we have

[7] For example, a first- or second-century letter (Aeschin. *Ep.* 10.2–3) tells how, at Troy, young women ready for marriage marked this by bathing in the river Skamander with the words 'Skamander, take my maiden-ness (*partheneia*)'; see further on this Currie 2002: 32. And for further examples of hair dedications and other rituals: Thuc. 2.15.5; Paus. 3.23.8; Plin. *HN* 31.7.10; Håland 2009 discusses both ancient and modern examples. Lock of hair: Aesch. *Choeph.* 6; Hom. *Il.* 23.141–151 (see also schol. *Il.* ad 14.246, ad 23.142a1, 23.142a2); Paus. 1.37.3. See discussions Holmes 2015: esp. 44–46 and Currie 2002: 31, n. 78, who draws attention to female practice.

[8] Hes. *Op.* 737–739.

[9] Hes. *Theog.* 133.

[10] Of all the Oceanids and rivers, Hes. *Theo*g. 337–371.

[11] As we learn when Achilles faces Asteropaios in the *Iliad* (Hom. *Il.* 21.158–160 and *Il.* 21.190–199): they vaunt their strength by vying about the relative power of Asteropaios' watery ancestry.

[12] Hom. *Il.* 18.607–608. See also Hdt. 4.8.

[13] Hom. *Il.* 18.607–608; cf. Hom. *Il.* 21.194–197.

[14] See Kirk et al. 1983: 11.

[15] Thomas 2000: 201.

[16] Hdt. 2.21 and 23.

[17] Pl. *Phd.* 112e.

[18] Kirk et al. 1983: 11.

[19] Finding a comparison with the idea of Okeanos specifically to the *Enûma elish*, a Babylonian creation myth dating roughly to 1100 BCE (see Scully 2015 for scholarship on this aspect, esp. 50–51, and on *Okeanos*, 52 n. 7). The Homeric epithet for Okeanos (*apsorroos*) may originally have been a Greek transliteration of 'Apsu-*ῥέω*' (Apsu-flowing) as Scully 2015: 57 n. 46 (citing West 1997: 148).

[20] Jones (2005: 6), citing, among other things, the arguments of Rudhardt 1971 that either a cosmogony involving water existed alongside the Hesiodic cosmogony beginning with Chaos, or that Chaos was understood as water. But the evidence for this is thin: see review of Rudhardt's approach in Griffiths 1976. West 1963: 172 notes that this is a feature of Stoic doctrine but is not found in the early sources.

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seen.[21] But Homer twice has a god describe Okeanos as 'the source of gods' creating';[22] and, elsewhere, Hypnos, refers to him as 'the origin of everything (*pantessi*)'.[23]

In philosophical and medical writings, we also find water identified as a crucial building block of the environment. The idea that it was the origin of everything may not have been widely held, but it seems to have been the view of the Presocratic philosopher, Thales, who, as we have seen, selected water as the first principle from which everything else originated and on which it depended.[24] And later philosophers certainly seem to have taken these ideas as having some cosmological significance, albeit allegorical. Plato, in the *Theaetetus*, may not have been entirely serious when he cites the Homeric descriptions of Okeanos, as part of his argument that all things were the offspring of flux and motion; but Aristotle does seem to be serious when he alludes to it in his discussion of Thales.[25] Others of the Presocratics also included water as a crucial ingredient in the interactions of what we think of as the elements that make up the world, be that as alternating with what is dry, as Xenophanes; or as interacting with the hot, the cold, and the dry, as Herakleitos, who also seems to have used the imagery of a river to evoke the constant flow of experience. As we have seen in the Introduction to this volume, these abstract ideas about the role(s) played by the elements are brought into the visible world by the Hippocratic writers. Their more physically focused reflections on water emphasize its role in shaping not only regional environments, but also the physiologies of those living in them.[26]

In this case study, the focus is on water as an element relating to change, an idea which, itself, takes several forms. To begin with, the capacity for transformation extends to water itself. In Greek myth we find water-related divinities themselves shifting shape, usually in order to evade capture, as do river gods,[27] and so too Proteus, and Thetis, who, in some versions, includes water among her changes of shape.[28] Water also has the potential to create change in others. In the

[21] Hes. *Theog.* 337–348.

[22] Hom. *Il.* 14.201–202 (Aphrodite to Hera) cf. 302 when Hera repeats the phrase.

[23] Hom. *Il.* 14.245–246. Kirk et al. (1983: 14) note this and the other descriptions 'need imply no more than that the river of Okeanos is the source of all fresh water… water is necessary for life, therefore life must have originated, directly or indirectly from Okeanos'; and this would mean limiting *pantessi* in the second passage, 'to living creatures and plant life'. But they also admit that, so understood, these references would be 'pointlessly abbreviated and give a somewhat bizarre effect.'

[24] Arist. *Met.* A3, 983b27, and see discussion Kirk et al. 1983: 88–95. That Thales argued that the earth floats on water: Arist. *De caelo* B13 294a28; and see discussion in the Introduction, p. 16.

[25] Ar. *Met.* A3, 983b27. Discussion of these passages, see Kirk et al. 1983: 14–15, who observe that Plato seems not to be 'entirely serious' in this reference to Homer.

[26] Pl. *Crat.* 402a (trans. Kirk et al. 1983: 195): 'Heraclitus somewhere says that all things are in process and nothing stays still, and likening existing things to the stream of a river he says that you would not step twice into the same river.' See Kirk et al. 1983: 195–197 on the difficulties of interpreting this passage. And see above on Xenophanes and Herakleitos (pp. 17–18) and the Hippocratics (pp. 20–22).

[27] River gods, including Acheloos: p. 59 with n. 158, p. 108 n. 3, and their personifications, p. 144.

[28] See Thetis, p. 59; and Proteus: Hom. *Od.* 4.450–459 (see also pp. 59 n. 158 and 108 n. 3).

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earthly realm, its mundane capacity for cleansing or washing was of supreme metaphysical importance, a source of purification against *miasma* or pollution.[29] Ritual bathing and cleansing were not only understood as important for mortals, but were also extended to the statues of the gods.[30] The waters of certain springs were particularly noted as sources of cleansing; and the ritual consumption of some springs could also work even more profound physical changes than simply removing dirt or pollution.[31] They could enable healing[32] or facilitate the ability to give a prophecy: at oracular sanctuaries of Apollo, bathing in or drinking the water of the sanctuary seems to have been a part of the ritual of receiving or, indeed, providing an oracle.[33] Salt water was also a significant agent of cleansing.[34] This might be through rituals of cleaning, but it also offered a place to enact more profound rituals of community cleansing in which the object whose pollution endangered a community, could be removed more completely. Examples include civic rituals in which objects were thrown into the sea in order to be hidden forever; or the enactment of punishments of those who had committed some kind of sacred crime, such as temple robbery or the mockery of rituals.[35]

This latter example, in which the sea provides a space into which objects or people are expelled from society altogether, brings to mind the role of water as marking a boundary—another theme of this case study. This aspect of bodies of water is apparent in the imagery of Okeanos, who/which marks the boundaries of the world, and also in Hesiod's imagery of crossing rivers and offering them prayers. There are many others, for example, the river Styx, which draws a line between life and death;[36] the seas over which heroes voyage in epic poems like the *Odyssey* or *Argonautica*. As those examples suggest, and as the stories in this case study will demonstrate, such boundaries must be crossed with care: the transformations they instil may be fatal.

[29] Parker 1983: 226: 'Among agents of purification, the most widely used and most basic was water.'

[30] Specific rituals include the Plynteria and Kallynteria in Athens; see further Steiner 2001: 105–120; Bettinetti 2001; and Montel 2014.

[31] A perception that meant it held an immensely significant role in ancient Greek sanctuaries over the period from the Archaic to Hellenistic period, where its many uses were 'located on a spectrum from mundane to religious'; see Klingborg et al. 2023: 1.

[32] Grantzioti et al. 2019.

[33] For example, at Delphi, visitors would bathe in the Kastalian spring (Heliod. *Aeth.* 2.26; Pind. *Pyth.* 4.29, 5.39; Plut. *Arist.* 20). Long (1872: 630), drawing on Eur. *Phoen.* 222, suggests that it relates particularly to washing one's hair. At Klaros, the priest drank water from a spring in a cave before delivering an oracle: Tac. *Ann.* 2.54 and Plin. *HN* 2.106. Pausanias 9.2.1 tells of a ruined temple of Apollo at Hysiai with a sacred well—and notes the stories that drinking from the well produced oracular utterances.

[34] Paus. 2.17.1 and see Parker 1983: 226–227.

[35] Cleaning: e.g., the statue of Athena at the Plynteria. Polluted objects: Paus. 6.11.6 (a statue that fell on and killed someone); Diod. Sic. 13.69 (the stelai containing the sentence against Alcibiades). The enactment of punishments: in Diod. Sic. 16.35.6, Philip hangs Onomarchos and throws his men into the sea as temple-robbers. Sea as instrument of divine action: Paus. 9.25.5–26.1 reports that a number of soldiers in Xerxes' army threw themselves into the sea, struck with madness after entering the Kabeiroi sanctuary in Boiotia, he suspects to loot it or mock it.

[36] Hom. *Il.* 8.369.

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This brief overview of the role of water in the ancient Greek imaginary suggests its complexity: we can see how different conceptions of bodies of water overlap and interact, blurring the boundaries of the sacred and secular realms, entangling physical environment, human existence and activity, and the powers and presence of what is more-than-human. The stories analysed in this case study reflect these imbrications, through narratives that reveal not only perceptions and experiences of the role and nature of water in local landscape, but also the social and cultural understandings that shape, and are shaped by, those perceptions. In exploring these tales, I discuss two water-related categories of transformation relating, respectively, to fresh water and the sea. I start with stories concerned with fresh water, whose underlying narrative pattern speaks of remembrance and commemoration.

Fresh Water

Rivers and Blood

There is little coherent evidence for stories that describe men or women being turned into forms of fresh water, which date to the period before the first centuries of the Hellenistic period.[37] In Ovid, we find Acis, lover of Galatea, pursued by Polyphemos and turned into a river god.[38] Polyphemos is also found in the *Cyclops* of Philoxenos of Kythera (writing in the very late fifth century or early fourth century BCE). There, he was intended, it is thought, to represent Dionysios, tyrant of Syracuse, who was once the patron of Philoxenos, but then had him exiled to the quarries, either for not praising Dionysios' poetry or for assaulting Dionysios' mistress.[39] If the story about Philoxenos' inspiration is true, then this represents another way in which myth might be used for personal expression. But turning back to this investigation, we note that Acis and his transformation does not appear to have featured in Philoxenos' composition; these seem to have been Ovidian additions.[40]

[37] [Plutarch]'s *De fluviis*, might seem at first sight a promising text for such stories. But, while the narrative patterns are often familiar—concerned with profound emotional situations, frequently a result of forbidden sexual activity, or of seeing or doing something one should not, particularly with regard to a divinity—the metamorphoses are few in number. Instead, the stories of 'grief, pain, insanity or fear' (Campbell 2024: 713) tend to result in deaths occurring in or near rivers—and the river then takes its name from those involved; where there are corporeal transformations, they tend to describe people being turned into mountains; see p. 36 of the case study, Earth.

[38] Ov. *Met.* 13.878–897.

[39] See Hordern 1999: 446.

[40] Ov. *Met.* 13.876, cf. Serv. ad Virg. *Ecl.* 9.39 and 7.37 (in these, Galataea turns into a spring); Sil. *Pun.* 14.221; *Anth. Lat.* 151, 886.

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In contrast, the story of Pyramus and Thisbe as told by Ovid, does not include a watery transformation.[41] This only occurs in other, much later Hellenistic sources, including a scene in Nonnos' *Dionysiaca*, where Pyramos and Alpheios, both rivers, compare notes on searching for their respective lovers, now both springs.[42] In fact, the Pyramos was a river in Kilikia, and, indeed, there is evidence that suggests that there was a local version of the myth of Pyramus and Thisbe that featured a watery metamorphosis. This material is for the most part visual, including a mosaic, dated to the second century BCE, at Nea Paphos on Kypros, which depicts *Pyramos* (labelled) with the attributes of a river god.[43] That Pyramos was identified in this region as a young river god is supported by coinage from Kilikia (some dating to as early as the first century BCE) and further visual depictions of Pyramos in (second/third century CE) mosaics at Antioch, one of which also includes an image of Thisbe, it seems in her role as a spring.[44] Knox has observed that Ovid's use of a water simile to describe Thisbe's reaction to seeing Pyramus so close to death may have been the poet's own acknowledgment of the (original) local water metamorphosis.[45]

This regional version may also support Pausanias' introduction of the local story of Selemnos, which describes the creation of the river Selemnos that flowed there (near the north Peloponnesian city of Patrai).[46] This is a story of lost love, in which Selemnos, a handsome youth, maintains the interest of a nymph Argyra (the name of a town and its spring nearby), until he grows old. He dies of love and Aphrodite turns him into a river. Pausanias remarks that he has heard two further ideas—one that Aphrodite made Selemnos forget Argyra, and, second, that bathing in the waters of the river can provide a cure for love—a quality 'worth more to humankind than a great deal of money.'[47] As Buxton observes, here is a 'non-geological, all-too-human truth embedded in a narrative of fantastic transformation.'[48] Moreover, it reveals a continuity with the past, which, I would argue, is not only associated with rivers, but with all the environmental phenomena for which these myths provide aitiologies.[49]

Two other eastern Greek rivers have similar stories attached to them, both found in later sources and both quite sickening in their details. The first is the story of the river Marsyas. The earliest and fullest Greek source, Xenophon, in the *Anabasis*, does not include a transformation: 'It was here, according to the story, that Apollo flayed Marsyas, after having defeated him in a contest of musical skill;

[41] Ov. *Met.* 4.55–166 (I spell the Ovidian name Pyramus). The text found on papyrus *P.Mich.* inv. 3793 indicates that Ovid may have drawn on a shared Hellenistic narrative, see Rosati 2024a: 371.
[42] Nonn. *Dionys.* 6.344–355 and 12.84–85; Himerios *Or.* 1.11; Them. *Or.* 11.151d.
[43] In contrast to the scenes from the story portrayed in fresco painting at Pompeii; see Knox 2014: 38–40.
[44] Knox 1989: 319, who also cites (324) a telling of the riverine version of the myth in *Rhet. Gr.* 1.271 (Walz 1832), but as he notes, there is no way of identifying the date of this version.
[45] Knox 1989: 328; Ov. *Met.* 4.134–136.
[46] Selemnos in Paus. 7.23.1–2.
[47] Paus. 7.23.3.
[48] Buxton 2009: 197.
[49] Buxton 2009: 198.

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he hung up his skin in the cave from which the sources issue, and it is for this reason that the river is called Marsyas.'[50] This skin, and the associated story of the flaying, is recorded also by Herodotos.[51] The addition of a metamorphosis appears implicitly in the report of Pausanias, who observes that the local people (the Phrygians in Kelainai) report that the river was once a great flute-player (composer of a piece called the 'Song of the Mother'); and that both the music of the flute and the river repelled an army of Gauls.[52] He does not give us further details of how the flute-player became a river. Nonnos provides a few more details, embedding them in the story of another riverine metamorphosis, this time of Seilenos. Maron is pitted against Seilenos in a dance contest, Seilenos collapses and is transformed, and Maron, the winner, addresses him about his foolishness in daring to compete—he holds up the story of Marsyas' skinning, and his subsequent transformation (by Apollo, prompted by a sense of pity) as a lesson that was not learned.[53]

Other versions of Marsyas' transformation describe the river springing from his blood, a transformation of this fluid that we have seen in previous case studies, where it has become something plant-related: these versions are, again, late in date.[54] The idea that it is the blood of the individual, rather than their body, that is transformed into a river is also found in the case of Lophis. The story is underpinned by a mytheme of sacrifice that we have seen already in the case study on Air: Lophis is the ruler's own son; killed at the behest of the Delphic oracle in order to provide water in the otherwise arid land of Haliartos.[55] The death is apparently quite random: a ruler of Haliartos visits Delphi to ask about water for the country; the priestess commands him to kill the first man he meets when he returns home. The details given by Pausanias add to the horror: once his father has hit him with his sword, the boy runs about, and the water rises up from the earth where the blood falls.

Springs and Tears

Turning to myths about women, we find a few stories of total metamorphosis, but as we will see, these tend to be from later writers. The earlier versions focus on the transformation of a different bodily fluid, tears, and examples of mortal woman turned corporeally into water are few. The earliest example, found in a fragment of Parthenius (dating to the first century BCE), concerns a nameless

[50] Xen. *Anab*. 1.2.8. [51] Hdt. 7.26.3. [52] Paus. 10.30.9.

[53] The River Seilenos: Nonn. *Dion*. 19.285–348, and Marsyas at 19.317–328. Eustathius (ad Dion. *Per*. 321) rationalizes the story and states that the skin is thrown into the river and washed out to sea.

[54] Alex. Polyh. *FrGH* 273 F76 ([Plut.] *De fluviis* 10. Palaephatus 47: Marsyas (who attributes the story to 'the Phrygians'); Hyg. *Fab*. 165; schol. Pl. *Symp*. 215b and *Minos* 318b. Blood: see above pp. 64–65, 87, 101.

[55] Paus. 9.33.4. Mytheme of sacrifice: pp. 82–88; see also case study Fire, *passim*.

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parthenos who rules over the Kilikians, and who loved a river called Kydnos—so Aphrodite turned her into a spring.[56] In a speech by a random Hamadryad anticipating the arrival of Typhoeus, Nonnos seems to describe the same story: he names the girl as Komaitho, and describes her mingling her waters with her *father* Kydnos (which may have been part of the original story).[57] This may be Komaitho, daughter of Pterelaos, who betrayed her father to Amphitryon by giving him the golden hair that she cut from her father's head; but the sources do not provide evidence that after her death (by Amphitryon) she was turned into a fountain, so this may be a third Komaitho.[58]

The other example is Alope, whose full transformation story is told by Hyginus. He relates how Alope was seduced by Poseidon: the son that resulted, 'Hippothous' here, but in other versions Hippothoon, was exposed twice (once by his mother, when he was suckled by a mare and rescued by a herdsman, and once by his grandfather Kerkyon; he was suckled again by the mare and then rescued), while Alope was shut up to die by her father. After Theseus killed Kerkyon and returned the kingdom to Hippothous, Poseidon turned Alope's body into a spring named after her.[59] Hippothoon was one of the ten tribal Athenian heroes, and earlier interest in this tale is shown by the evidence for plays about the story written by Choirilos, Euripides, and Karkinos II, but none of these suggest a metamorphosis.[60] Demosthenes and Pausanias also mention Alope in relation to her son but they do not mention her transformation either.[61] There seems no reason to disagree with Forbes Irving's conclusion that: 'We assume perhaps that, as often, the local ancestral hero (here Hippothoon) was the son of a local spring or river deity, and that the name of this mother prompted the story of transformation later on.'[62]

This local focus is particularly characteristic of stories about nymphs, the most famous of which is, perhaps, Arethousa, a nymph who becomes a stream in order to flee the love of a river, Alpheios—either by changing herself (according to

[56] Parthenius F28 (Lightfoot 2010) = Steph. Byz., ap. Eustath. ad *Il.* 2.712, i. p. 327.37–41, van der Valk 1971.

[57] Nonn. *Dion.* 2.143–144, 40.141–143 (cited by Lightfoot 2010: 521, n. 23, ad Parthenius F28).

[58] Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.4.7, Frazer 1921 ad loc. cites Tzetzes ad Lyk. *Alex.* 932 and 934.

[59] Hyg. *Fab.* 187, cf. 238 and 252. Hesych. (*α* 3239) identifies the spring as near Eleusis. Pausanias (139.3) identifies the spot where she was put to death by her father Kerkyon, and the name given to it ('The Wrestling Ground of Kerkyon'); Hellanikos *FGrH* 4 F43 also described something of the story (the parentage of Hippothoon). Stephanos of Byzantium cites Pherekydes (*FGrH* 3 F147) for the story of Alope, which he gives as the name of a Thessalian city. See Kearns 1989: 173 (Hippothoon) and 146 (Alope).

[60] Choirilos *TrGF* 2 F; see Paus. 1.14.3, who tells us that Poseidon was also the father of Kerkyon, Alope's father; Eur. FF105–111 (Collard and Cropp 2008); Karkinos II *TrGF* 70 F1b; Arist. *Nic. Eth.* 1150b.6–10. In Euripides' play, Poseidon may have given a final speech that looked forward not only to the succession of Hippothoon, but also the transformation of Alope, but again, there is no explicit evidence in the surviving fragments (see Collard and Cropp 2008: 116).

[61] Paus. 1.38.4 and Dem. 60.31.

[62] Forbes Irving 1990: 303.

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Pausanias) or by being transformed by Artemis (as described by Ovid).[63] This does seem to be a very old story, likely to have been told by settlers in Syracuse who came from Elis, where there was also a spring called Arethousa. The river Alpheios flows from Arkadia, across Messenia and Elis, disappearing several times underground in its course, and this may have given rise to the idea of the nymph being pursued across the landscape. In contrast, both Kyane (a nymph who becomes the waters she ruled over, in punishment for blocking Hades' descent to the Underworld with Persephone)[64] and Canens (who, exhausted with grief for her husband Picus, eventually lies down on the 'icy bank' where she then both melts and disappears)[65] are likely to be Ovidian inventions. Similarly, Egeria's metamorphosis (because she is inconsolable, she is turned by the goddess Diana into a spring) seems likely to have been an Ovidian development of this figure already significant in the history of Rome, as the second wife to its second king, Numa Pompilius.[66] Ovid also mentions a full physical transformation for Hyrie, the mother of Kyknos, who wept so much when he became a swan that she was changed into a lake; but the description is brief, almost a footnote.[67] Another relevant nymph may be found in Achilles Tatius: the figure of Rhodopis appears to draw on a number of familiar mythic tropes (she is a huntress, sworn to chastity, turned into a spring called Styx when she breaks her vows with a youth called Euthynikos). Scholars have argued, based on an image by the Darius painter on the so-called 'Rhodope' kalyx-krater, that the story may be based on a myth, probably from northern Greece, concerning one Rhodope, a nymph associated with the mountains of Thrace.[68]

We see the ways in which these myths live in the imagination, continuing to mark and shape local landscapes. This aspect is used powerfully in the final example: Peirene, who appears first in Hesiod, but only to record (one version of) her father, Oibalos.[69] In contrast, the much later account of Pausanias reports that she was the daughter of Acheloos—the river that runs down to the Gulf of Korinth.[70] Pausanias' account was written centuries after the figure of Peirene,

[63] See Rosati 2024b ad Ov. *Met.* 577–641, esp. 584–585. Paus. 5.7.2 (in this version, Alpheios is also a hunter, who follows her metamorphosis by changing himself into a river out of love for Arethousa); Ov. *Met.* 5.572–641 (see also Serv. ad Virg. *Ecl.* 10.4; Virg. *Aen.* 3.694; Stat. *Silv.*1.2.203 and *Theb.* 1.271, 4.239; Lucian, *Dial. Marin.* 3). A second Arethousa with a somewhat similar story appears in Hesiod's *Catalogue of Women* F130 (Most 2018b); she has intercourse with Poseidon and is changed into a fountain in Chalcis by Hera.

[64] Kyane: Ov. *Met.* 5. 425–437 describes how she dissolves into her own waters from inconsolable grief. Cic. *Verr.* 4.107 and Diod. Sic. 5.4.2, describe this as the name of a spring marking where Hades descends; cf. Claudian *Rapt. Pers.* 3.231 where she is a nymph left 'half dead' after Hades' attack. See Rosati 2024b: 561 on Ovid's invention of the nymph. Kyane also discussed above p. 1.

[65] Canens: Ov. *Met.* 14.320–434; see Hardie 2024: 181 on Ovid's creation of Canens.

[66] Egeria: Ov. *Met.* 15.547–551; see Serv. ad Virg. *Aen.* 7.763.

[67] Hyrie: Ov. *Met.* 7.371–381; see also p. 90 and pp. 165–6 on Kyknos.

[68] Rhodopis: Ach. Tat. 8.12; krater: Basel S34; see discussion by Taplin 2007: 245; Schmidt et al. 1976: 95–108; and Bremmer 2013.

[69] Hes. F196 (Most 2018b).

[70] Paus. 2.2.3.

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and the related fountain and its architecture, had become a focal point of Korinthian pride. He gives Peirene a pivotal role, as he 'walks through' the rich cult landscape of Korinth, positioning her as a central figure in the local coastal topography: her father the river, her two sons (by Poseidon) Leches and Kenchrias giving their names to the two port cities, Kenchreai and Lechaion.[71] Her son Kenchrias is the key to her continued presence in the landscape; she becomes a spring because of the tears she sheds as she mourns him (Artemis has killed him by mistake). The trigger for this metamorphosis is unnecessary misery: Pausanias reinforces our sense of Peirene's grief by not even providing us with the events that led to this devastating act of divine inattention.

Peirene's physical change appears to have been total, binding her into the landscape that her male family members dominate. And, for Pausanias, she may also mark another metamorphosis: Pausanias is walking through a landscape that has been transformed by the Romans. Korinth, whose destruction marked the end of the political freedom of the Greek cities, has been rebuilt, and refounded—as Pausanias himself points out. He describes the new Roman buildings around the fountain: a Roman vision of the Greek landscape, a Roman version of Peirene and her experiences, for which her tears still flow.[72] Here is a landscape that still weeps about a needless act of violence; but this is one that has been perpetrated not by gods but by the Romans. While Pausanias may make little explicit comment on contemporary events,[73] this example suggests how his use of myth brings past and present into vivid and eloquent contact.

Even if such corporeal transformation is relatively uncommon, the reasons for it—grief and tears—are found as key characteristics of earlier stories for the origins of springs and streams. One example is Kleite, the wife of Kyzikos, King, according to Apollonios Rhodios, of the Doliones.[74] The city named after Kyzikos is on the southern side of the Propontis, and, in Kleite's story, it is a stopping point for the Argonauts.[75] When Jason and his party of sailors arrive, Apollonios stresses how recent the marriage is between Kleite and Kyzikos, and how Kleite is still without a child. All goes well until Jason and his men try to leave and are then blown back in the night during a storm. They do not realize that they have landed on the same island: the Doliones mistake the Argonauts for 'a Pelasgian war-party of Makrian men';[76] the Argonauts fight back, and Kyzikos is among those killed.

[71] Paus. 2.2.3.

[72] Paus. 2.1.2, 2.3.2–2.3.5. See Arafat 1996: 95 on Pausanias' attitude to the Roman colony.

[73] Lafond 1996: 197 (comment made by Bowie in the 'Discussion' of LaFond's paper).

[74] For the different traditions regarding the people that attack the Doliones, and why, see Fowler *EGM* 2: 218–219.

[75] Neanthes (*FGrH* 84 F11) described Kyzikos as having a son, also named Kyzikos; Jackson 2004: 10 suggests that this version would not communicate sufficient pathos for Apollonios, and so he rejected it. In Euphorion F9 (Lightfoot 2010), Larisa, daughter of Piasos, is given as Kyzikos' soon-to-be wife, and she goes back to her father, rather than killing herself.

[76] Ap. Rhod. 1.1023–1024 (trans. Race 2009).

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In the cold light of day, the mistake is discovered. Kyzikos is buried with full honours and Kleite kills herself. Apollonios Rhodios (possibly drawing on the local historians Deilochus and Neanthes of Kyzikos[77]) tells us that at her death, the tears of 'the nymphs of the grove' were made a fountain by 'the goddesses' and the fountain was named after her.[78]

The emphasis of the story is thus, as Jackson argues, placed 'on the locality, and thus, by association, on the inhabitants of that locality.'[79] Moreover, Apollonios makes a direct link between the people of the poem and the 'Ionians' of his day (the scholiast on a slightly later line explains that Ionians from Miletos had colonized the area). He does so first through the rites in honour of Kleite and Kyzikos, and then in the subsequent ritual in honour of Rhea, the Great Mother, apparently (according to the scholiast) sourcing his information from Maiandrios of Miletos.[80] But the associations of this tale are, he suggests, even subtler: there are also links to the story of the foundation of Kaunos—of which Apollonios wrote a famous foundation poem—and thus of another transformation story, that of Byblis.[81]

At the root of Byblis' story is the love of her twin brother Kaunos (which may or not be explained in the context of the practice of brother–sister marriage of Karian satraps).[82] In what seems to be the oldest version (by Nikainetos),[83] Kaunos flees from Byblis because of his depth of feeling for her; in Nikainetos' account, she remains behind and is turned into an owl. But there is a further version which most others follow which attributes the feeling of love to her—and it is because of this that Kaunos leaves.[84] Byblis then hangs herself, and a spring arises from her tears.[85] The spring (as some say, according to Parthenius) gave rise to a stream.[86] At first sight, perhaps more rationally, Antoninus Liberalis describes the stream as emerging from the rock from which she tried to throw herself; then he describes how the local nymphs held Byblis back, transforming her into a Hamadryad, that is, a nymph who lives in a tree. And for the full physical

[77] Schol. Ap. Rhod. 1.1065–1066, p. 94 = Deilochos *FrGH* 471 F10b (with Cuypers 2018) = Neanthes *FrGrH* 84 F12; see discussion Jackson 2004: 10–11. The Orphic *Argonautica* (595–600) suggests that the spring is from Kleite's tears and provides more detail about her emotional state.

[78] Ap. Rhod. 936–1076 describes the event. Parthenius 28 includes her hanging, but not her tears.

[79] Jackson 2004: 11.

[80] See Jackson 2004: 11–12. Maiandrios of Miletos *FrGrH* 491 F3 = schol. Ap. Rhod. 1.1126–1131a (Wendel 1958: 100–101). Apollonios asserts the Ionian origins of Cyzicus explicitly at 1076, *Kuzikon ennaiontes Iaones*, 'the Ionians who dwell at Kyzikos', where the scholiast explains that 'they are (called) Ionians because they were colonists of the Milesians', *Iaones de dia to apoikous einai Milēsiōn* (Wendel 1958: 95). Jackson (2004: 12) argues that this is a result of Ptolemaic propaganda, specifically shaped by Ptolemaic interest in Miletos.

[81] See Jackson 2004: 13.

[82] Forbes Irving 1990: 300.

[83] Parth. *Amat. narr.* 11 = Ap. Rhod. F5; Aristokritos *FGrH* 493 F1; Nikainetos F1; also Conon *FGrH* 26 F 2; Nonn. *Dionys.* 13.548; schol. Theoc. 7.115 (Wendel 1914).

[84] Ant. Lib. *Met.* 30; Hyg. *Fab.* 243; Ov. *Met.* 9.450–665; Ov. *Ars Am.* 1.283.

[85] Forbes Irving 1990: 300. Arist. *Rhet.* 1402b uses the phrase *kaunios erōs* to refer to this incestuous love as illicit.

[86] Paus. 7.5.10 refers only to the stream, not the story behind it.

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transformation, we have to wait (again) for Ovid's description, where tears, grief, and physical transformation are brought vividly together, and, yet again, the woman is described as weeping so much that she dissolves.[87]

Commemoration?

As we have seen, the majority of these stories are linked to Hellenistic or later Roman sources. A very few tales can possibly be traced to earlier stories, and this type tend to describe how a woman gave her name to a spring or river, by dying, rather than by actually becoming the spring. These stories thus also interact with the narrative pattern of sacrifice, which we have seen in the case study on Air in this volume. For example, Makaria's death, and its link to the Athenian spring of that name, is recounted by Pausanias:[88]

> In Marathon is a spring called Makaria with the following legend. When Herakles left Tiryns, fleeing from Eurystheus, he went to live with his friend Keyx, who was king of Trachis. But when Herakles departed this life Eurystheus demanded his children; whereupon the king of Trachis sent them to Athens, saying that he was weak but Theseus had power enough to succor them. The arrival of the children as suppliants caused for the first time war between Peloponnesians and Athenians, Theseus refusing to give up the refugees at the demand of Eurystheus. The story says that an oracle was given the Athenians that one of the children of Herakles must die a voluntary death, or else victory could not be theirs. Thereupon Makaria, daughter of Deianeira and Herakles, slew herself and gave to the Athenians victory in the war and to the spring her own name.

The connection between Makaria and the spring may have been made earlier, in Euripides' *Herakleidai*, where a nameless young woman is simply led away to her death—Euripides also seems to have introduced Makaria's self-sacrifice into this story[89]—but again there is no physical transformation.[90] In later sources, Makaria

[87] Ov. *Met*. 9.640–651.

[88] Paus. 1.32.6 (trans. Jones 1918). On the 'sacrifice' pattern, see pp. 82–88.

[89] Eur. *Heracl*. 565–574. Wilkins (1995: xix) argues that 'there is a strong suspicion' that Makaria 'was created by Euripides for this play', arguing that he is unlikely to have known about the Makaria spring at Trikorythos that Pausanias (1.32.6–7) and Strabo (8.6.19) mention; but he does admit that this link between spring and anonymous local heroine may have occurred at the end of the play in lines now lost. Kearns (1989: 58) follows Wilamowitz (1935: 69–70) in arguing that the spring had no original link with the heroine, but gained the connection through the toponym 'the head of Eurystheus' mentioned by Strabo, together with the influence of Euripides' play.

[90] Eur. *Heracl*. 474–607. As Loraux (1987: 41) has sharply observed, in Euripides' play, Makaria's death cannot simply be equated to her nuptials because she is not promised to Hades as his bride, and yet, in her own words, she will not go to Hades as a virgin. Loraux suggests that her bloodstained death is rather 'an anomalous and displaced way of transforming virginity into womanhood'.

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seems to become confused with a euphemism for (the location of/in) Hades. Thus, in the Suda, Herakles' daughter's fate is described, and the entry notes how she was buried by the Athenians at great expense, because she had died on their behalf; but this source first observes a separate Makaria, a daughter of Hades.[91] It notes the proverb *ball' es Makarian*, 'go to Makaria', or 'go into blessedness' as a euphemistic way of referring to this location, and of wishing someone to go into misery or destruction. In contrast, Zenobius' explanation of the proverb elides person and location, with the initial and arresting phrase, *Makarian gar en Haidou chōrion diatupousin*, that is, 'They represent Makaria as (the name of) a place in Hades.'[92] It goes on to describe the proverb as a saying of the Athenians who honour her grave with flowers and garlands, and explains how, at first, the proverb was used for those who gave themselves up to death in accordance with virtue; and later (wrongly), for all purificatory acts.

Pausanias also provides a similar tale concerning Kallirhoe.[93] She refuses the advances of a young man, one Koresos, who then goes to Dionysos as a suppliant. As a result, the community begins to suffer from a plague—and an oracle tells them that Koresos must sacrifice Kallirhoe, or another. She cannot find any help (not even from her foster parents, Pausanias tells us); but when she stands at the altar, Koresos kills himself. On seeing him dead, she does fall in love with him—and, then, full of pity for him and shame about her behaviour, she kills herself. It is later generations who then give her name to the nearby spring. Finally, Nonnos tells us about another woman, whose death is also linked to Dionysos. Aura goes mad, eating children, after she is raped by the god. When she leaps into the river Sangarios, Zeus does turn her into a spring—but, here, the spring is not given her name.[94]

Cleansing?

How should we understand the role of the water in these stories? At one level, we can see how the stories make material a key emotional dimension: grief leading to death (for example, Agyra, Pyramus and Thisbe, Peirene, Canens, Egeria and Hyrie, and Kleite). But there are also stories of unwanted love and sexual assault (Arethousa and Alope) and tales of social dishonour so overwhelming it either drives the person feeling it to kill themselves (e.g., Byblis, possibly Seilenos, and, in that context, the story of Marsyas; possibly Komaitho, Kallirhoe, and Aura), or those around them to killing that person (Kallirhoe—although she ends up killing herself; and Alope). These stories underline the negative role of the gods in

[91] *Suda s.v. Makaria* (μ 51).
[92] *Paroemiogr.* 2.61; cf. schol. vet. *Ar. Eq.* 1151.
[93] Paus. 7.21.1–6.
[94] Nonn. *Dionys.* 48.238; Forbes Irving (1990: 303) notes that 'one assumes this is not a local aition'.

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human lives, either inadvertently involved (the story of Lophis, killed by his father because of a Delphic oracle; Makaria's sacrifice because of a Delphic oracle; Kallirhoe and Koresos—and the Delphic oracle) or because they are perceived to have offended a god (Aura, driven mad by Dionysos at the behest of Artemis; Kyane who obstructs Hades; Rhodopis who breaks her vow to Artemis). But we also find a number of stories where transformations (of body or bodily fluids) seem to be prompted by more generous divine responses: Pyramus and Thisbe, Komaitho, Peirene, Kleite and Byblis, and the late tale of Acis.

We can see a number of ways in which the fluid symbolism of water is at play here: for example, its wandering flow, which, on the one hand, allows Pyramus to search for his lover Thisbe, and, on the other hand, allows Arethousa to escape Alpheios; the confluence of water that allows Komaitho and Kydnos to be united. For ancient minds, as well, its role as a cleansing agent may be very significant here, a response to the various ways in which the actions in these stories could be described as polluting. In that vein, Forbes Irving has introduced a framework of *miasma*/pollution to explain myths concerning metamorphoses/deaths in fresh water specifically for monstrous creatures. As examples of these monstrous mythical females who die in fresh water, he highlights the story of Aura, discussed above, along with those of two others—the monster Lamia and the cruel queen, Dirke—and he argues for similarities with the story of the Hero of Temesa, and the fate of the man, Tartaros, who threatened to rape Aspalis. He suggests that the fact that 'in all three cases the monster finally disappears in water' provides a relevant link: the common theme may be that disposal in water may represent a way of resolving pollution.[95]

Before exploring this framework for the larger category of stories, let us have a closer look at this set of stories. They reveal a fluid spectrum of metamorphoses, with the three female protagonists at different positions on it: Dirke is a cruel mortal woman; Aura is a mortal woman made mad by gods, who murders the local people and her own child; the Lamia is a child-eating monster in the more traditional sense, but even in her case, her background and manifestation are many-storied, including a tale of divine punishment that transformed her from mortal to monster.[96] When we turn to their metamorphoses stories, we find another spectrum, this time of transformation.

It is only in Aura's story that we find a complete physical transformation—but again, this is from a later source. Nonnos recounts how Aura is punished by Artemis for her disrespect; her madness is brought on by finding that she has been raped by Dionysos (although she does not know who it is) while she sleeps. She commits many murders, so she is certainly 'polluted' in a metaphysical sense. Her metamorphosis occurs after her death, which she seeks as a relief from

[95] Forbes Irving 1990: 303.
[96] Aura: see n. 94; Dirke: see n. 97; Lamia: see n. 98 and further literature in Eidinow 2018.

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shame, and it may indeed be interpreted as the resolution of her metaphysical state as much as her physical and mental suffering. As told by Nonnos, the account of the changes in her body and mind, as a result of Dionysos' assault, are given in far more and shocking detail than the account of her changing from mortal into spring.

Similar themes of social shame may be traceable in the story of Dirke—although it is the figure Antiope who experiences them. Antiope becomes pregnant by a god; flees her home and is brought back by her uncle, Lykos, and his queen, Dirke. Antiope's children are exposed, then found and brought up by a goatherd; meanwhile, Antiope, in captivity, is tormented by Dirke and Lykos. When she manages to escape, she finds her grown sons—who recognize her and kill Dirke, who has pursued her. They throw Dirke's dead body into a spring that, in earlier sources, from then on bears her name; it is only in later sources that her body or her blood becomes a stream.[97] Here, initially, we have the memorialization of an event; the later metamorphosis seems to suggest something more—and it seems significant for her characterisation that it is her blood that is transformed, since this is usually a male attribute.

Commemoration marks the story of the Lamia, or Sybaris. As related by Antoninus Liberalis, it follows a structure familiar from Greek literature, in which a disaster is followed by an oracular consultation that demands a sacrifice, which leads to salvation.[98] In this case, the suffering community has asked the Delphic oracle what they should do, and the resulting sacrifice to the Lamia, chosen by lot, is a young man, Alkyoneus. Eurybatos, a passing stranger, falls in love with Alkyoneus, and offers to die in his place. Then, we are told, he hurls the monster from the cave; she strikes her head on a rock and 'because of this wound she faded from sight.' The spring emerges where she hit the rock. While this tale is not clearly one of metamorphosis, it is resonant with the stories of death and commemoration that we have seen for mortal women and nymphs.

Forbes Irving offers two further parallels: the first, the story of the Hero of Temesa, offers a pattern of danger averted that is very similar to that of the Lamia—and, indeed, the notion that it describes the end of a *miasma*/pollution is far more compelling than for that story. In this account, Pausanias tells us, the ghost of a man (a member of Odysseus' crew) is stoned to death after raping a woman, and proceeds to attack the people of Temesa.[99] In response to their seeking help, an oracle from Delphi says they must give the ghost a sanctuary and a woman every year. A man called Euthymos, passing by, falls in love with the current

[97] Eur. *Antiope* (Collard and Cropp 2008); cf. Hyg. *Fab.* 8. See also Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.5.5; Nic. Dam. *FGH* 90 F7; Hyg. *Fab.* 7; Stat. *Theb.* 3.204, and schol. (Sweeney 1997).

[98] Ant. Lib. *Met.* 8.

[99] According to the version given by Paus. 6.6.7; Aelian (*VH* 8.18) describes him going down to the Kaikinos river and disappearing there, again with no marker left behind. Strab. 6.1.5 does not offer any helpful detail and FF98–99 of Callim. *Aet.* are too difficult to read at the crucial point of the story.

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woman—and kills the ghost, who sinks into the sea.[100] Forbes Irving's other parallel, the death of Tartaros, is less compelling. As Antoninus Liberalis recounts, Tartaros was a tyrant who demanded the right to rape any woman in the neighbourhood. When he summons a maiden called Aspalis, she hangs herself—and her brother seeks revenge. He kills Tartaros, who is thrown into a river, which then bears his name.[101] This story, like those of the Lamia and of Dirke, seems to be neither a story of metamorphosis, nor one that concerns pollution. The landscape holds the record of his story, but Tartaros' death is not the cause of the generation of the spring. While it may symbolize a 'cleaning out', it memorializes the events, rather than representing the resolution of pollution; its naming is an act of remembrance.

These stories offer us some very specific examples of *miasma*/pollution cleansed, and while they are not all strictly to be understood as metamorphoses, they do evoke water-related transformations and are resonant with the stories of death and commemoration of mortal women and of nymphs, which we have already explored. Those tales, in turn, may not concern monsters, but they may also relate to pollution cleansed: we can observe how the individual events that they describe, be they impersonal bodily functions of birth and death, or crimes such as acts of murder, or social transgressions, can all be understood as introducing a theme of *miasma*. And, across them all, we can identify a further dimension that seems to prompt the metamorphosis or moment of change: the role of intense emotions, in particular, but not only, that of extreme grief. Again and again, across the stories in this category, it is profound emotional experiences that prompt the transformations of their protagonists, establishing them, or commemorating them, in the landscape, through the ceaseless flow of rivers and springs.

The Sea

We turn from story patterns concerned with remembrance, to stories that, I will argue, are shaped by a dynamic of rebirth. This section of the case study on Water is concerned with stories in Greek myth about the transformations of bodies—particularly, as we will see, the bodies of women—in relation to the sea. Perhaps obviously, human bodies tend not to turn *into* sea—it is difficult to imagine what this would be like—nevertheless, the sea itself plays an important role in other kinds of transformations. This section therefore considers the sea not only as a space for metamorphosis into another animate creature or inanimate object to

[100] The story is discussed in Currie 2002: 30–35 and 2005: 131, 134, which links the Hero to a river-god and the role in receiving the virginity of young women in pre-nuptial rites (see this case study, n. 7), and discusses the heroization of Euthymos of Lokri.

[101] Ant. Lib. *Met.* 13.

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take place, but also as a boundary that, when it is crossed, prompts a transformation, sometimes from life to death, sometimes of a more elaborate sort. Again, as we have seen in the previous section, inherent in many of these stories, is water's role in cleansing *miasma*/pollution, as a substance not only with which to wash it away, but also into which to cast polluted entities.

The narrative patterns examined in this section will include jumping into the sea from cliff-tops or being thrown into the sea in a chest, or *larnax*, by relatives; as well as being, simply, condemned to be drowned. The specific story patterns or mythemes examined here overlap with each other with regard to certain aspects of structure and detail:[102] they are gendered—and we will see that specific patterns appear in the cases of male protagonists. But, to a striking extent, these stories largely relate to women, and concern—and problematize—the sexual transgressions of female characters. This particular focus on women is significant, and, I think, cannot be disconnected from the idea of sea as a purificatory element: these are stories that can be directly related to notions of the polluted human body requiring purification. But, I argue, the sea also plays another role in the patterns of these stories, providing what van Gennep described as a 'period of margin'. I understand that here, not as the usual notion of a 'liminal space', which tends to be viewed as part of a process of returning the protagonists to stability and domesticity, but as a space of radical change, or rebirth.

Women Who Jump into the Sea

There are many stories of women who, in situations of desperation, jump into the sea. We can start with the story of Bolina, of the town of the same name, in Achaia, southern Greece, who is loved by Apollo, and fleeing from him, jumps from a cliff into the sea.[103] This mortal woman, colliding with the desire of an immortal, gives her name to a Greek community—the myth is a sorrowful but memorable *aition*. The basic storyline—the mytheme of a mortal woman in crisis, who jumps from cliffs into the sea—appears across a number of stories; it is a signifier of desperation. The mytheme even attaches to such historical figures as Sappho, said to have jumped to her death from the rocks of Leukas out of unrequited love for the ferryman Phaon, and to the goddess Aphrodite herself.[104] But other elements of this mytheme are more complex. To begin with, there is a variety of motivations for the jump: for example, compare the story of Ochne, daughter of Kolonos, as recounted—according to Plutarch—by the sixth-century

[102] Mythemes: Lévi-Strauss 1955: 81–106; see the Introduction, p. 7.

[103] Paus. 7.23.4.

[104] See, for example, the fleeing Lokrian maiden of Lyk. *Alex.* 1159. For Sappho, see Strabo 10.2.9; and Aphrodite (amongst a list of others) by Ptolemy Hephaistion (recorded by Photios 153a7–153b22, Henry 1962: 70–72).

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poetess Myrtis. Ochne falls in love with Eunostos, who does not return her passion; she accuses him of rape, and her brothers kill him, and are held captive by Eunostos' father Elieus. Beset by remorse, Ochne tells Elieus the truth. He tells Kolonos, who, we are told, gives judgment. After this, her brothers are banished, and Ochne throws herself from a cliff into the sea (whether this is part of the judgment is unclear).[105] While death may be considered a form of transformation, not all these stories end so decisively; for some there is, instead, a metamorphosis into another living or present entity.

One example is that of Britomartis, whose story has a faintly comic aspect (she jumps from a cliff into fishing nets), although in most versions it ends with a serious divine metamorphosis, as Britomartis becomes Diktynna of the Nets (Krete) or Aphaia, among the Aeginetans.[106] Diodorus provides two different stories giving the origin of her name: in the first, she is a virgin huntress who dwells on Krete, where she invents nets used for hunting; in the other, she flees off a cliff pursued by Minos, and lands in some nets.[107] Later authors offer another chapter, in which she returns from the nets to land on the island of Aigina, where she is then pursued by a fisherman, whom she flees, finally disappearing in a grove. Unsurprisingly, given her biography, she is a favourite of, and sometimes identified with, Artemis, who in some versions is credited with her acquisition of divine status.[108] The stories offer *aitia* for the wide spread of the cult of Diktynna (a goddess of hunting and fishing) across Krete and Aigina.[109] Similar aitiologies of cult are also found in the stories of Molpadia and Parthenos, who jump into the sea to escape the anger of their stepfather, Staphylos, after the wine over which they are keeping watch, is destroyed by swine as they sleep.[110] These two are transformed by Apollo into goddesses—Parthenos to be worshipped at Bubastos in the Knidian Chersonese, and Molpadia becoming Hemithea, worshipped first at Kastabos, on the Karian Chersonese, and then, we are told, more widely under Rhodian hegemony.[111]

[105] Plut. *Quaest. Graec.* 40; this is the *aition* for the exclusion of women from the cult of Eunostos.

[106] Paus. 2.30.3 gives the different names/locations. See Callim. *Hymn* 3.189–200.

[107] Diod. Sic. 5.76.3; Diodorus clearly disapproves of the second version: he appears to understand her to have been a goddess before her plunge into the nets and thinks that an immortal would never have reached such a helpless state. Other later accounts see the story as one of transformation from mortal into god (see Strabo 10.4.12; Paus. 8.2.4 and 2.20.3; Ant. Lib. *Met.* 40).

[108] Paus. 2.30.3; Ant. Lib. *Met.* 40.

[109] She also had cult in cities of southern Greece: Sparta (Paus. 3.12.8, see also 3.14.2); Hypsos as Artemis Diktynna (Paus. 3.24.9); and Kephallenia (Ant. Lib. *Met.* 40).

[110] Staphylos: king of Bubastos, Karia (Parthenius, *Amat. narr.* 1); living on Thasos (Suda *s.v. enecheis* (ε 1276)). The former may be more likely, bearing in mind the cult locations of his daughters.

[111] Diod. Sic. 5.62.1 asserts that Parthenos also becomes a Hemithea—since the story of Lyrkos (Parth. *Amat. narr.* 1) staying overnight in the house of Staphylos describes the presence of two daughters Hemithea and Rhoeo 'and since this Hemithea lived in Bubastos, we are justified in identifying her with the Parthenos of Diodorus.' It is worth bearing in mind that 'Hemithea' simply means 'demi-goddess' so is a name that identifies a role (rather like 'Parthenos' in this sense); see Graf 2006. Appropriately, although her cult banned wine and pigs (as sacrifices or otherwise), this healing goddess operated through incubation (see *SEG* 14.690 *c.* 150 BCE). See also Cook and Plommer 1966: 162–173, with G. E. Bean at 62–63 for the inscription; Fontenrose 1951: 126.

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On Tenedos, Hemithea was also called Leukothea, and was known as Amphithea. Leukothea was originally a mortal woman, Ino, the nurse of Dionysos.[112] The story of Ino-Leukothea is perhaps the most well-known version of this type, giving rise not only to the cult of Leukothea, but also that of Palaimon (originally her son Melikertes) celebrated at the Isthmian games.[113] Ino's husband, Athamas, shoots Learchos, his son (in one version, driven mad by Hera, enraged because he has taken in the infant Dionysos).[114] In her grief, Ino jumps from a sea-cliff, holding Melikertes; in some versions she has previously boiled him in a cauldron.[115] The sea goddess Leukothea is known to Homer—she rescues Odysseus, when he is wrecked during his journey from the island of Kalypso to Phaiakia—but he does not provide any backstory.[116] Pausanias notes that the son is said to have been landed on the Korinthian isthmus by a dolphin[117]—the Isthmian games are then instituted in his honour as Melikertes/Palaimon;[118] in the Roman form of the cult, Ino is understood as Mater Matuta. We will return to the dolphin motif later in this case study; but can briefly observe here how it tends to be associated with safe passage through the sea, and, sometimes, marks a journey from (the threat of or actual) death to life, sometimes a continued mortal existence, sometimes a divine role. In the case of Melikertes/Palaimon, the references to dolphin involvement occur in two late sources, which may be influenced by earlier material in which dolphins appear.

Of Ino-Leukothea, Pausanias records one city—Megara—which claims to have recovered her corpse, and made the resulting burial mound the focus of a heroine cult.[119] The Molyrian Rock from which mother and son jump was apparently regarded as sacred (although the rocks below were associated with Skiron and

[112] Leukothea as alternative name of Hemithea: schol. *Il.* 1.38; and Amphithea: Hekataios apud Steph. Byz. *s.v. Tenedos* (τ 91).

[113] Gebhard and Dickie 1999 and Pache 2004; see Hyg. *Fab.* 2: who gives Ino and Melikertes the names 'Mater Matuta' and 'Portunus', respectively (see Ov. *Fast.* 6.491–550 and Serv. ad Virg. *Aen.* 5.241).

[114] Paus. 1.44.7 (mentions Athamas acting in a fit of madness although without naming the divinity responsible, but also says he was angry at Ino's plotting); Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.4.3; Zenobius *Cent.* 4.38; Tzetzes on Lyk. *Alex.* 22, 107 and 229; Ov. *Met.* 4.519–542 and *Fasti* 6.491–550; Serv. ad Virg. *Aen.* 5.241; schol. Stat. *Theb.* 1.12 all say that Hera imposed Athamas' madness. Hera's anger is referenced in the scholia on Eur. *Med.* 1284 (Schwartz 1891: 209–210) as the reason why Athamas kills Learchos (it also mentions Hera inflicting madness on Ino) and by the scholiast on Hom. *Il.* 7.86. Hyg, *Fab.* 2 says Athamas' madness was inflicted by Jove.

[115] Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.9.1 and 3.4.3.

[116] Hom. *Od.* 5.333–353.

[117] Paus. 2.1.3 at Kromyon; he is accompanied by a dolphin at Paus. 1.44.7–8 and Philos. *Imag.* 2.16. Description of games being instituted (but no dolphin mentioned): Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.4.3; Pind. F5 (Race 1997); Plut., *Vit. Thes.* 25.5–7 = Hellan. *FGrH* 4 F 165; Plut. *Quaest. Conviv.* 5.3; Serv. ad Virg. *Aen.* 5.241; schol. Ap. Rhod. 3.1240, 254.11–19 (Wendel 1958). There is some connection or confusion with Glaukos in some sources: Athen. 7.297.

[118] Beaulieu (2016b) examines the theme of the dolphin in fascinating detail. Pache (2004: 178) stresses that it is a common and appealing mytheme: 'the image of a boy sitting on a dolphin has universal appeal and is found again and again in different traditions.' See pp. 169–71 for more dolphins.

[119] Paus. 1.42.7; although (4.34.4) near Korone was a location along the coastal road where Ino was said to have come up from the sea after her divinity had been accepted.

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therefore considered cursed).[120] Yet another Leukothea surfaces in Rhodes: this one was originally Halia, who was a sister of the Telchines, and had six sons and one daughter with the god Poseidon. Her sons prevent Aphrodite from staying there: in her wrath, she bewitches the boys, and they go on the rampage—including raping their mother, Halia. Poseidon buries the young men—they become the Eastern Daimones—while Halia throws herself off a cliff in her shame and becomes Leukothea.[121]

Halia's fate prompts us to consider young women with more supernatural genealogies; not all are as moribund as she is. As told by Apollodoros, the Titaness Asteria, a daughter of Koios and Phoibe (and the mother of Hekate, according to Hesiod) experiences a double metamorphosis. First, pursued by Zeus, she jumps in the form of a quail, and then, in some versions, becomes an island—first Ortygia, then Delos itself; this second metamorphosis may occur after a second pursuit by Poseidon, in the sea.[122] Ovid provides a story that echoes some of these themes: Perimele is thrown into the sea from a cliff when her father discovers that she has been raped by Acheloos. We will return to this story—but review it here because Acheloos supports Perimele in the water and intercedes with Neptune so that she may be turned into an island.[123] These young women are, as it were, drafted into the material of the landscape through their intense and frightening experiences.

Asteria's metamorphosis into a bird is also echoed in a number of further stories of young women jumping from a sea-cliff.[124] Bird metamorphosis also occurs in the story of the Alkyonides, the daughters of the giant Alkyoneus (their number varies, as later sources report).[125] These young women throw themselves into the sea after their father is killed by Herakles, and are turned into kingfishers by Amphitrite.[126] The story of Psamathe follows the pattern of throwing oneself into

[120] Paus. 1.44.8. See p. 93 for Skiron.

[121] Diod. Sic. 5.55.4–7.

[122] Hes. *Theog.* 409–411 (names Asteria but does not describe a metamorphosis); see also Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.2.2 and 1.2.4; Callim. *Hymn* 4.36–40; Serv. ad Virg. *Aen.* 3.73; Tzetzes on Lyk. *Alex.* 401; schol. Stat. *Theb.* 4.795. Hygin. *Fab.* 53 appears to conflate a number of different stories: Asteria is chased by Zeus, and throws herself into the sea in the form of a quail, then is changed from a bird into the island of Ortygia; this becomes Delos after Latona (Leto, who is being chased by Python and is sent there by Zeus) gives birth to Apollo and Diana (Artemis) there. Pind. *Pae.* 7b.43–52 states that she is cast into the sea as a rock, becoming the island of Ortygia; that Pindar identified this island with Delos is supported by Pind. *Pae.* 5.40–42 (see Gantz 1993: 40, who notes that this is not a tale told in another Archaic source). Nonnos offers the most compact version of this myth—from mortal, to quail, to island (see Nonn. *Dionys.* 2.125; but in 33.336, it is Apollo who roots her in the sea, and see also 42.410). Athen. 9.392 tells us that Phanodemos (*FGrH* 325 F2) wrote about Delos as being full of quail and for that reason having the name 'Ortygia'; see Jacoby 1954: 157 for the difficulties of this passage.

[123] Ov. *Met.* 8.590–610.

[124] See case study Air, pp. 81–88 and 92, for discussion of women throwing themselves off high city locations and also jumping from a height and turning into birds.

[125] Suda *s.v. Alkyonides hēmerai* (α 1298); see also p. 92.

[126] Cf. Eustathius ad Hom. *Il.* 9.563 which tells how the name is given to Kleopatra, wife of Meleager, who dies of grief after the death of her husband.

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the sea to avoid pursuit, followed by metamorphosis; but she becomes a seal.[127] The mytheme also attaches itself to later versions of Hekabe's death: Hyginus tells us that she throws herself off cliffs into the Hellespont before being changed into a dog.[128]

These stories are frequently ones of pursuit, sometimes including capture, and desperation, and/or stories of loss and grief. They capture the experience of profound emotion and enact an emotional plunge of fear and despair. This theme emerges also in the stories told of some women who throw themselves into the sea from places other than cliffs. Some fall from boats: thus, Alkinoe is punished by Athena at the request of Nikandra, a spinner who works for her for a year, but whom she refuses to pay. Athena inflicts on Alkinoe a passion for one Xanthos, a stranger from Samos; Alkinoe runs off with him, but realizes what she has done as they sail away—and throws herself into the sea.[129] Helle is another example: she and her brother are escaping, on the back of a golden ram, from being sacrificed by their father Athamas, who has been tricked by their stepmother. But Helle falls into the sea—and is transformed into a sea goddess, giving her name to the Hellespont.[130] Ovid's version of the story of Skylla includes her pursuing Minos—and in the process she and her father both become birds.[131] In other versions of the myth she drowns—pulled behind the ships of Minos, for example.[132]

As Skylla's story suggests, the mytheme of despair survives also in stories of women of a more monstrous type: for example, some stories about the Sirens tell of their demise when confronted by a person unmoved by their songs (some say Orpheus, others Odysseus)—they throw themselves into the sea.[133] Finally, we can note a story of survival: Hyginus includes Io throwing herself into the sea, frightened by a terrible shape sent by Hera—but she survives and swims to Skythia.[134] Of course, in this story, she has already been physically transformed

[127] Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.12.6; schol. Eur. *Andr.* 687 (Schwartz 1891: 295). Neither Hes. *Theog.* 1004 nor Pind. *Nem.* 5.12 reference the metamorphosis.

[128] Hyg. *Fab.* 111 (the place is called Kyneus after this event). Lykophron locates this on the south-east tip of Sicily (*Alex.* 1181–1182), see Hornblower 2015: 420–422.

[129] Parth. *Amat. narr.* 27; this is apparently from the Curses of Moero (dating to the third century BCE; Lightfoot 2010).

[130] Fontenrose (1951: 127) sees this as a link to the Ino-Leukothea story, especially since Helle is received by Poseidon and the Nereids, becomes a sea goddess, and then has a son with Poseidon (see Ps.-Erat. 19; Ov. *Fast.* 3.869–874).

[131] Ov. *Met.* 8.6–151 (Skylla becomes a Kiris, and Nisos a sea eagle); see also [Virg.] *Kiris* (esp. 480–541): in this version Skylla is changed into a Kiris by Amphitrite, and her father, Nisos into a sea eagle. On the development of this story, see Kenney 2024b ad Ov. *Met.*8.6–151, esp. pp. 125–126. See case study Air, pp. 93–94.

[132] Prop. 3.19.21–28 and Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.15.8. Paus. 2.34.7 sees her thrown from the ship.

[133] Strab. 6.1.1 only mentions the sirens flinging themselves into the sea—not the cause. Hyg. *Fab.* 125: Odysseus is too clever for the Sirens and they are doomed to die. Hyg. *Fab.* 141: they are described as casting themselves into the sea. Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.9.25: Orpheus sings a counter-melody. Ap. Rhod. 4.891–919: describes Orpheus singing a counter-melody—but still one sailor leaves the ship for the sirens; cf. Hyg. *Fab.* 14.4. In neither of these latter two cases do the Sirens kill themselves.

[134] Hyg. *Fab.* 145.

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by her lover, Jove, into a heifer—the metamorphosis marking her changed state as one beloved of, and protected by, the king of the gods—and the manipulation of the mytheme's usual pattern reflects this circumstance. And yet, even as she survives, moving from country to country and giving birth to a son, Jove transforms her again into the goddess, Isis.

Women Thrown into the Sea in a 'Chest'

The stories of Leukotheas who jump from cliffs usher us, albeit indirectly, into the second mytheme with which this study of sea-related transformations is concerned: that is, of women who are thrown into the sea, usually in chests and by their fathers. There is a version of the Ino-Leukothea story related by Pausanias, in which Ino comes to a small town called Brasiai to nurse Dionysos—because that is where Semele and her son have washed up. In this, as Pausanias tells us, local version of the myth of Semele, we find her not consumed by the fiery thunderbolt of Zeus, but confined in a chest—the Greek is *larnax*—by her father Kadmos, and cast into the sea. The chest comes to rest near a town in Lakonia, originally called Oreiatae, then changed to Brasiai; Pausanias makes a connection with the Greek word *ekbrazein*, 'to cast on shore'.[135] Unfortunately, Semele has died during the journey, but is buried with a glorious funeral—and her son is nurtured by Ino, who comes to Brasiai 'on her wanderings'.

This theme also intersects intriguingly with some of the other stories described above, their locations and their characters. Thus, we find the metamorphoses of Molpadia/Hemithea and Parthenos into goddesses apparently occurs because of the fondness felt by Apollo for their third sister, Rhoeo, which results in her pregnancy. When her father discovers this, he shuts her up in a *larnax*, and casts her into the sea. She washes up on Delos, alive and well, and prays to Apollo to save the life of her child, whom she calls Anios. The god relents, first hides and then rears the child, instructing it in the art of divination and conferring honours upon it.[136] It will go on to become the mythical king of the island of Delos, who prophesies the end of the Trojan war.[137]

Rhoeo's sisters, who end up with cult in the Black Sea, provide another link to a similar story. This concerns another Hemithea (not Molpadia/Hemithea), this time a daughter of Kyknos, a son of Poseidon, and king of Kolonai, a city in the Troad. Their stepmother falls in love with Hemithea's brother, Tennes, and when he refuses to acquiesce, she accuses him of rape. Kyknos places both Tennes and his sister in a *larnax*, and throws them into the sea: they travel in this way to the

[135] Paus. 3.24.3–4; *ekbrazein*, 'to cast on shore' (LSJ). See pp. 117–120 for Semele killed by Zeus.
[136] Diod. Sic. 5.62.2. See above, p. 161.
[137] Appears in the Kypria (*Bernabé, PEG* F 29 = *EpGF* F19); Lyk. *Alex.* 570 with schol.; Diod. Sic. 5.62, 1–2; Serv. ad Virg. *Aen.* 3.80; see further Bruneau 1970: 413–430.

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island of Leukophrys, which becomes Tenedos.[138] This story will also later intersect with the Trojan cycle, as Tennes dies fighting Achilles—either defending the island or his sister's honour (in the latter version, and recalling some of the stories found in the case study, Earth, she is swallowed up by the earth as she flees).[139]

Finally, we come to the most famous episode of this kind, that of Akrisios and his daughter Danae—and her son Perseus. In an early version, Akrisios' response to the oracle that threatens his life with his daughter Danae's son leads him to throw her into a *larnax* and then into the sea—this may happen before she gives birth.[140] In later versions, he locks her up in a bronze underground chamber, then throws her and Perseus into the chest and then the sea after the child has reached an age when he can be heard playing (Figure 4.2).[141] Danae and her son wash up on Seriphos, and Danae continues to have a mythic role, if only as the target of a threat that Polydektes can use to elicit heroic feats from Perseus.[142] A similar story is told of Auge, described, by Hekataios of Miletos (according to Pausanias), as the regular sexual partner of Herakles, whenever he visited Tegea.[143] In one version of this myth, apparently the basis of Euripides' play *Auge*, and also recounted by Pausanias (and attributed to Hekataios), after she gives birth to the hero Telephos, her father puts her and her infant in a chest and sends them out to sea.[144] Pausanias reports that she comes to the plain of the Kaikos and marries

[138] Paus. 10.14.1–4; Phot. s.v. *Tenedios Anthropos*; Suda s.v. *Tenedios Anthropos* (τ 310); and Diod. 5.62 and 5.83. In Diod. Sic. 5. 83.1–5, the mother's lies are supported by a flute-player. Lyk. *Alex.* 232–242 tells a story involving two children who almost die when they are cast adrift by their father (raised by birds) after he believes stories told by a flute-player; they finally die with their father, killed by a millstone. In Konon *FGrH* 26 F1.28, Kyknos learns the truth and then comes to Tenedos but is rejected by Tennes who cuts through the stern cables of his ship so that he cannot land. In Apollod. *Epit.* 3.25, Kyknos buries his wife alive and stones the flute-player to death. Kyknos: see also pp. 90 and 152.

[139] In Proklos' epitome of the *Kypria*, Achilles kills Kyknos, son of Poseidon. Apollod *Epit.* 3.26 also includes Thetis' warning not to kill Tennes given to Achilles, because he will then be killed by Apollo (see also Plut. *Quaest. Graec.* 28 who adds that Achilles pursues Hemithea; Tennes defends her, and Achilles kills him). Tennes in some versions is the son of Apollo (Apollod. *Epit.* 3.23). There does not seem to be any need to suggest an incestuous relationship between the siblings (as does Seaford 1990: 82) on the basis of the brother's defence of his sister from rape; their presence in the chest together suggests a confluence of mythemes rather than being prompted by any element of the story. Seaford states that Hemithea is swallowed up by the earth—and that this is the usual punishment for such an incestuous act, (citing the story of Halia and her sons, Diod. Sic. 5.55.6–7; see p. 63); he cites Tzetzes ad Lyk. *Alex.* 232 for the burial of Hemithea, which describes her as escaping the pursuit of Achilles in this fashion, and Plut. *Mor.* 297e–f, which does not mention her being hidden, only that she escapes. Others swallowed by earth: see pp. 58–59.

[140] Hes. F241 (Most 2018b).

[141] Pherekydes *FGrH* 3 F10; similar story structure in Pind. *Pyth.* 12.17–18. A scholiast to Pindar raises the possibility that it is Danae's uncle Proitos who fathers Perseus (see F284 Snell and Maehler 1975) and this is also indicated by Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.4.1; Simonides 543 (Campbell 1991) pictures Danae watching her son sleeping in the chest.

[142] Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.4.2; but see Pind. *Pyth.* 12.14–15 for a version in which Polydektes compels Danae.

[143] Paus. 8.4.9: Hek. *FGrH* 1F 29a (see Fowler *EGM* 2: 309–311).

[144] See Gantz (1993: 431) who suggests that Euripides may have invented the chest in his *Auge* (as suggested by Strabo 13.1.69). Auge put in a chest: Paus. 8.4.9.

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Figure 4.2 Attic, red-figure stamnos with cover, *c.* 470–460 BCE, attributed to the Deepdene Painter. The main panel shows King Akrisios watching his daughter Danae and her son Perseus who stand in a chest about to be set adrift. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Rogers Fund, 1917. 17.230.37a, b.
CC0 1.0 UNIVERSAL (www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/256900).

Teuthras—and that the tomb of Auge still exists, decorated with a bronze statue of a naked woman.[145]

Women Condemned to be Drowned

The case of Auge introduces the third and final mytheme, in which a young woman is condemned by her father to be drowned for a sexual transgression, but is then rescued and sold or married off to a foreigner. In these accounts, her child is usually exposed, but survives and locates his mother later in the story. In the case of Auge, a number of versions survive that omit the episode with the chest, and instead offer a range of narratives in which Auge, either during her

[145] Paus. 8.4.9.

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pregnancy or after she has given birth, is condemned to death by her father—and then somehow rescued, and sent away to Mysia.[146] In some of these versions she goes with her child; in others, the child survives exposure (suckled by a deer), grows up elsewhere and finds her when he is grown up. A similar story of drowning may have been told by Euripides about Aerope, in his *Kretan Women*.[147]

This narrative pattern also survives in Herodotos' account of Kyrene's foundation, where he records that in the Kyrenaian version, a young Kretan woman, Phronime, is falsely accused by her stepmother of fornication, and given by her father to a merchant to drown.[148] The merchant instead takes the girl away and sells her. She becomes a concubine to Polymnestos at Thera, and their child later becomes the founder of the settlement at Kyrene—picked out for this task by Delphi, according to one of the foundation stories recorded by Herodotos. This story draws attention to the particular connection between this mytheme and Krete.[149] But it is also notable how the pattern has been adapted in this case, so that Phronime becomes pregnant only on reaching Thera, thus ensuring that the parentage of the future founder of Kyrene gives him a connection to Thera, but ensures that this is not his only legacy.

The narrative pattern of a young woman condemned to be drowned by being thrown into the sea is found in the story of Perimele, as told by Ovid (discussed above); and in the story of the daughter of Smintheus, as told by Plutarch, in the *Banquet of the Seven Sages*.[150] The story concerns the eight founders of Lesbos, seven of whom had unmarried daughters. They are told in an oracle that, for the foundation to be successful, they must sacrifice a bull to Poseidon and a living maiden to Amphitrite and the Nymphs of the sea. Those who have daughters draw lots—and the daughter of Smintheus is selected. As we have seen in other stories of such enforced sacrifice, we never learn her name. She is given beautiful clothes and ornaments; but, just as she is about to be cast into the sea, a young man, Enalos, who is in love with her, seizes her and throws himself, with her into the sea.

[146] In the earliest version, Hes. *Catalogue of Women* F117 (Most 2018b), the gods send Auge to Mysia, where Telephos is born—it is possible that she was rescued from drowning, but there is no indication in what remains of this section of the poem. Auge redeemed by her father from drowning and sent away: Diod. Sic. 4.33.7–10. Auge redeemed from being put to death, and sent away: Apollod. *Bibl* 3.9.1. Auge raped: Paus. 8.47.4. Auge gives birth on her way to being drowned: Paus. 8.48.7, Telephos exposed and suckled by a deer: Paus. 8.54.6. See Gantz 1993: 428–431.

[147] According to the scholiast's comment on Sophocles *Ajax* 1295–1297; otherwise, however, the sources do not make reference to this event.

[148] Hdt. 4.154.

[149] The Kretan connection—the punishment may also have been treated in Euripides *Aerope* as McHardy (2008) points out—is intriguing; but since we do not know how the mytheme may have influenced Euripides (the same narrative pattern apparently featured in his *Auge*) the claim that these suggest (5) 'that these were at one time traditional punishments for unchaste and disobedient women in Krete' seems to assume too much.

[150] Ov. *Met.* 8.590–610, see p. 163. Plut. *Conv. sept. sap.* 163b (and *De soll. an.* 984e); Athen. 466c, citing Antikleides, an Athenian, as his source, gives further details and versions.

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But the lover who apparently so bravely sacrifices himself with the daughter of Smintheus is not obviously her saviour; instead, he rather eclipses her sacrifice. Plutarch goes on to relate how Enalos appears later, saying that dolphins bore him through the water and put him ashore, safe and sound, on the mainland. This is followed by the story of him meeting an enormous wave, and then being followed by cuttlefish to the shrine of Poseidon; the largest of these creatures brought with them a stone that was dedicated there, and which, as Plutarch notes, 'we call Enalos'. Plutarch does not tell us what happened to the daughter of Smintheus. But Athenaeus adds that Enalos claimed to have spent time as the superintendent of Neptune's horses and brought back with him a golden cup, stating that the young woman was still with the Nereids. The unidentified, voiceless, sacrificed young woman, set alongside her heroic and rewarded male lover, encapsulates something of the gender difference in stories of women and of men interacting with the sea; the next section explores this further.

Men and Sea Mythemes

The story of Enalos is a helpful starting point for considering how these mythemes of falling or being thrown into the sea may occur differently for male and female protagonists. Starting with the mytheme of jumping into the sea, we can note how this narrative allows Enalos to remain rooted in the real world, even while extraordinary things happen to him. The stone named Enalos may suggest that some form of hero cult can be traced—but this is not a transformation of Enalos from human to stone, nor are we told that he is divine; instead he is simply made more remarkable. And this story pattern is illustrated by a number of other examples: among them are stories about the poets Arion and Hesiod, and the hero Theseus—all featuring dolphins who bring the protagonist to shore, albeit with some key differences.

Arion's story is one of two in which men are forced to jump into the sea. The poet is made to jump by the men who have taken him prisoner on the ship; in the other story, a group of men jump to escape the god Dionysos. In the case of Arion, we hear his story first from Herodotos:[151] Arion, a famous singer and musician, is threatened by the Korinthian sailors who are carrying him from Tarentum to Korinth—they tell him to either kill himself (for burial on land) or throw himself from the ship. He chooses the latter, and only asks that he be allowed to stand in full singer's regalia and sing the *orthios nomos*, which was a song in honour of Apollo. After he jumps, a dolphin takes Arion on his back and carries him to Tainaron—and Herodotos notes the bronze statue of a man riding a dolphin that

[151] Hdt. 1.23-24. There is extensive scholarship on this episode, see Dewald and Munson 2022: 214–18, esp. 215 for modern works; and Griffiths 1999: 181.

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stands at Tainaron in honour of this event.[152] Some scholars have interpreted this location as significant because it was traditionally regarded as the location of an entrance to the Underworld; thus, they argue, we can view Arion's passage through the sea as equivalent to a journey through the Underworld, in ancient Greek myth, a *katabasis*, and the dolphin as taking on the role of a *psychopomp*.[153]

We have seen something of this *katabasis* aspect in later versions of the story of Melikertes, where the dolphin delivers the body of the boy, who will then receive hero cult. And something similar may be read in the story that attaches to the poet Hesiod: after his murder, his body is thrown into the sea, and a dolphin brings it to shore. He then becomes associated with a return from the Underworld.[154] For Arion and Hesiod, this mytheme underlines a male poet's relationship to the gods; its gendered nature emerges when we compare the very different stories that accompany Sappho's death by jumping into the sea.[155] To underline this point, we can also briefly add another voluntary jumper-into-the-sea, the hero Theseus. The presence of dolphins also marks his relationship to the divine: they accompany the hero after he jumps into the sea (from his ship) in response to the challenge of Minos, as the two men compete for the significance of their divine ancestry.[156] Here, the event, including the presence of these dolphins of salvation, underlines Theseus' immortal pedigree and his heroic status.[157]

Having established the character of the dolphin in this narrative pattern, we can return to the other story of men forced to jump into the sea, and enjoy the ways in which it is manipulated in the story of Dionysos and the pirates, in the *Homeric Hymn to Dionysos* (7). Here, we see Dionysos rebel against his role of the assumed victim, in a series of terrifying metamorphoses; but it is the pirates who jump from the ship to escape him—and are then transformed into dolphins. Something of the physical change may be captured on a famous black-figure kalpis attributed to the Micali Painter and now in the Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia (Figure 4.3). This depicts, on its shoulder panel, a triton figure (fish tail, but human head and arms), and, across the main panel, a series of images of a man falling into the sea: in the first, the man has a human head and a fish tail; in each of the four successive images, the figure has a dolphin head and legs in place of his tail. The final image is of two dolphin-headed, human-legged figures. To the far left, there is a strand of ivy leaves, perhaps suggesting the presence and

[152] Hdt. 1.24.8.

[153] On the 'funerary overtones' of this tale see Beaulieu 2016a: 121; and further elaboration of the ancient perceptions of the dolphin in this role, Beaulieu 2016b.

[154] Hesiod *Certamen* 14 (West 2003b). Melikertes: see p. 162.

[155] See above, p. 160; no dolphins accompany her death.

[156] Bacchyl. *Ode* 17. There is some disagreement as to whether this poem should be categorized as a dithyramb or an ode, on the nature of Bacchylides' 'dithyrambs', see Fearn 2007: 163–225.

[157] This emphasis on Theseus' pedigree is politically significant: whatever the date of Bacchylides' *Ode* (as Fearn 2007: 247 argues) it would have imposed an Athenian identity on its performance (by a Kean chorus at the Delia), producing a 'merging of identities', and can be read (242) 'as a document of Athenian cultural imperialism'.

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Figure 4.3 Black-figure kalpis, 510–500 BCE, attributed to the Micali Painter and now in the Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia.
©Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia. Archivio fotografico. Foto Mauro Benedetti.

power of Dionysos.[158] In the *Homeric Hymn to Dionysos* (7), the dolphin metamorphosis imprisons these pirates: no death as release, but rather an ongoing divine punishment.

The story of Arion and the dolphin-pirates intersects with the other major male version of the narrative pattern of jumping into the sea, in which men are punished by being thrown into the sea, a mytheme that resonates with historical punishments of this nature (as we have seen in the case study Air).[159] Turning to the mytheme of being thrown into the sea, we have already mentioned Hesiod's body, thrown into the sea after he has been murdered and brought ashore by a dolphin. Mythic occurrences of being thrown into the sea as a punishment echo

[158] Black-figure kalpis, *c.* 520–510 BCE, attrib. to the Micali Painter; formerly in the Collection of the Toledo Museum of Art (Toledo 1982 134) returned to Italy 2013, and now in the Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia. Beaulieu (2016a: 172–279) rightly sets these and other similar drinking-related vessels with dolphin imagery in the context of the symposium, as figurative commentaries on the experience of drinking.

[159] See pp. 87–88.

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historical accounts of this as a penalty: Myrtilos is thrown into the sea from his chariot or by Pelops, after attempting to rape Hippodameia, when he comes to collect his reward (leading to the famous curse)—an aitiology for the Myrtoan sea;[160] and Lichas is thrown into the sea by Herakles, because he had brought Deianeira's poisonous robe;[161] while Lokrian Ajax has the rocks on which he has washed up pulled from under him by Poseidon.[162] The notion of divine punishment resonates through these stories and highlights the role of the sea as a place of both cleansing and of annihilating loss.[163]

Related to this narrative pattern, and reversing some of the gender polarities that we have witnessed in previous stories, are tales of women throwing male babies or children into the sea. We have seen the story of Melikertes and his mother. In addition, Eumolpos is thrown into the sea by his mother Khione, who had intercourse with Poseidon, in order to avoid her father Boreas, the North Wind, finding out.[164] And there are further distortions of these more typical story patterns: for example, Medea chops up her brother and throws the pieces into the sea.[165] Alongside their explicitly alarming content, the deformations of the usual narrative pattern work at an implicit level, like infrasound, signalling to the audience that there is something very wrong—even in the world of myth.

But this is not to say that we do not find men jumping and being transformed in similar emotional circumstances to those of these women. Men also jump from grief (although in these cases the element of the sea appears to be a later addition). The first case is Aisakos, a son of Priam, who loves Asterope, daughter of Kebren, mourns for her when she dies—and then becomes a bird (according to Apollodoros).[166] Ovid adds some vivid detail, that Asterope is stung by a viper running away from him; that he jumps into the sea out of guilt and is turned into a diving bird.[167] A second case is Aigeus, the father of Theseus, who, watching out

[160] Soph. *El.* 505–515 and Eur. *Or.* 988–996; Apollod. *Epit.* 2.8 and Pherekydes *FGrH* 3 F37b, quoted by schol. Ap. Rhod. 1 752–758a (Wendel 1958); Hygin. *Fab.* 84; schol. Pind. *Ol.* 1.114; Diod. Sic. 4.73; Eustath. ad Hom. p. 183. The aitiology is made explicit by Lykophron *Alex.* 164.

[161] Soph. *Trach.* 237, 750 and Aesch. Fr. 17 (Strabo 10.1.9). Clearly, there are some cultic connections, which can be traced: thus, Strabo tells us of the Tomb of Lichas near Euboïs, which is mentioned in Aeschylus' play *Glaukos Pontikos*.

[162] Lokrian Ajax: Hom. *Od.* 4.505–511. Larson (1995: 17–18) explicitly names these three, as well as Hesiod the poet, as having similar stories to that of Ino's plunge from a cliff-top. The story of Ikaros (Diod. Sic. 4.77.5–9; Strabo 14.1.19) involving a fall into the sea, after flying too close to the sun picks up something of this narrative pattern. For historical accounts of this as a penalty, see p. 147 with n. 35.

[163] In her analysis of the sea in the ancient Greek imagination, Beaulieu's (2016a: 59–89) discussion of male figures who are transformed by contact with the sea includes male figures who make voyages across the sea: Jason and Perseus; Herakles in the cup of Helios. While relevant, I have not included this theme as it is so broad.

[164] Apollod. *Bibl* 3.28; Paus. 3.15.4. [165] Apollod. *Bibl* 1.9. [166] Apollod. *Bibl* 3.12.5.

[167] Ov. *Met.* 11.749–795 (see also case study, Air, p. 89, on this story); also Serv. ad *Aen.* 4.254 and 5.128. Tzetzes on Lyk. *Alex.* 224 seems to follow Apollodoros.

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for the wrong-coloured sail jumps—but, in Greek myth, this is a jump onto rock, not the sea, which appears to be a later Roman addition.[168]

So far, we have not found anything similar to the apotheosizing stories of women jumping. The story that comes closest to such an ontological transformation is found in the case of Glaukos. The tale has many variants, as Athenaeus records, but one version states that it was the experience of jumping into the sea that turned Glaukos from a fisherman from Anthedon into an oracular sea creature.[169] Apparently drawing on a version by Nicander, Athenaeus relates how Glaukos was a hunter who found some grass growing by a spring, which revived a shocked hare. He ate the grass himself, was inspired, and then, as a storm was brewing, threw himself into the sea ('in accordance with Zeus' plan'); the same tale appears in Pausanias who notes that it is generally accepted that Glaukos becomes a sea god, and refers to a play by Aeschylus on the subject.[170] And, indeed, fragments of *Glaukos the Seagod* seem to offer us some indications of how that transformation was perceived to have occurred—and some details of the results:[171]

F 25e

<**HERDSMAN**>…foolish…or storm…few…Know (*imperative*)…(Of this?) there is moreover (clear?) evidence (of) eye(s)…(5)…(not) dim-sighted nor…in vain…frightful things and (urgent?)…(Know that?) I am a herdsman and (from the locality), frequently here in Chalcis… Messapium's leafless height (10)…grazing cattle…I saw a wonder…the curve of Euboea round the cape of Cenaean Zeus right by the tomb of the wretched Lichas…(turning?) like a chariot and four…(15)…

F *26

…†a beast† in human form †living in the sea's waters†

F *27

…and thickly bearded on the upper lip and lower chin…

The second narrative pattern for female figures, that of being put in a chest, is found far less frequently with regard to male figures. Tennes offers the most directly similar example: as we have seen, he ends up travelling in this fashion with his sister, suggesting that this mytheme needed only a slight alteration from

[168] Gantz (1993: 276) explains that Hyginus (*Fab.* 43, 242) is the first extant writer to state that Aigeus threw himself into the Aegean; as noted (see case study Air, p. 87) other sources only mention that he threw himself from the Acropolis (Paus. 1.22.5), or from a rock (Plut. *Thes.* 22.1). See previous note (p. 82 n. 100) on Hyginus' treatment of this story—and similar wording in the story of the jump of the daughters of Kekrops.

[169] Athen. *Deipn.* 7.296f–297b. Glaukos at Anthedon, Boiotia; Ovid *Met.* 8. 917–959 tells the story in detail. The variants recorded by Athen. *Deipn.* 7.294c include a variety of divine, semi-divine, and mortal parents.

[170] Paus. 9.22.7 (who references Pindar as well as Aeschylus).

[171] O'Sullivan and Collard 2013: 251–252.

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its traditional, gendered form.[172] In contrast, the incarceration of Thoas, father of Hypsipyle, provides a more intriguing parallel. In a story in which gender roles and expectations are more generally disrupted, this version of the mytheme sees Thoas hidden in a *larnax* and set afloat by his daughter, in order to protect him from the murderous women of Lemnos.[173] Thoas is not the only male in Greek myth to travel (across water) in such a conveyance as a way of staying safe from surrounding dangers: according to Apollodoros, Deukalion travels in a *larnax* to avoid the floods.[174] These versions of the mytheme prompt a brief consideration of the appearance of the *larnax* more generally across Greek myth.

Some scholars have noted the role of the *larnax* as a receptacle for the dead, in particular for the exposure of children and we can understand that from some of these stories.[175] Others have argued that the evidence for this specific association is slim.[176] While its associations to death may be significant here, they can also be nuanced with a cluster of mythemes in which parent figures place objects relating to the lives of their children, or indeed the children themselves into a chest, often described as a *larnax*, in order to keep them safe. These include the egg that will hatch Helen[177] and the log that is Meleager's life.[178] Other objects stored safely in a *larnax* include: Hephaistos' tools;[179] and the golden lamb that Thyestes keeps hidden to ensure his accession to the throne of Mycenae;[180] while Herodotos uses the term to describe Oroites 'treasure' chest.[181] In comparison, across the narratives of myth, the use of the term *larnax* in funerary settings is relatively rare: it does occur in Homer as the receptacle for Hector's ashes, but there, still, the emphasis is on keeping the ashes safe in case the Greeks attack.[182] Similarly, Thucydides uses the term to describe the 'chests of cypress wood' into which the bones (remaining after the bodies were burnt) of the Athenian war dead will be placed.[183] These examples, taken as a whole, seem to suggest that a *larnax* is the kind of chest in which one puts both things and people in order to keep them secure, possibly hidden from harm, whether they are dead, alive, or inanimate.[184]

[172] See above, pp. 165–166.

[173] Ap. Rhod. *Arg.* 1.622. In some versions of the story, Thoas is discovered by the women of Lemnos and killed (as Hdt. 6.138.4, but this does not mention the *larnax* or Thoas' death). In the *Hypothesis* to Pindar's *Nemean Odes* the women achieve this by putting Thoas in the chest and throwing this into the sea in order to drown him; but in this account, the Greek word used for the chest is *kibotos*. The nature of the chest as a vehicle of imprisonment is highlighted by these events. Beaulieu's (2016a: 93–99, esp. 96) discussion of these alternative stories assumes that the *larnax* appears in these other stories, and so she comes to the conclusion that the *larnax* may symbolize both life and death.

[174] Deukalion: Apollod. *Bibl* 1.7.2. See discussion of this motif in Bremmer 2008: 110.

[175] Delcourt 1944 argues for this, criticized by Brulé (1987: 133), who argues rather that the *larnax* 'signifie à la fois vie et mort'.

[176] Huys 1995: 202–204.

[177] Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.10.7.

[178] Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.8.2 (see pp. 114–17). Adonis is also placed in a *larnax*, Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.14.4 (see p. 62).

[179] Hom. *Il.* 18.413.

[180] Apollod. *Epit.* 2.11.

[181] Hdt. 3.123.

[182] Hom. *Il.* 24.795. In case the Greeks attack: Hom. *Il.* 24.800.

[183] Thuc. 2.34.

[184] The child Erichthonios is placed in a *kistes* according to Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.14.6 and a *kibotos* according to Paus. 1.18.2; these also indicate the theme of being hidden in a chest to stay safe.

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A Prism of Approaches

Cross-Cultural Goddess

The echoes and overlaps between these mythemes draw attention to a broad spread of similar stories. For example, the mytheme of a woman who has a link to a child (as nurse or as a potential mother) and then throws herself into the sea, where she changes from human form is found, with minor variations, across the Aegean, and in other and older cultures. Joseph Fontenrose, for example, has argued that a number of these myths are related by eight themes (pursuit and flight; plunge into the water; illicit love, incest, rape, lust; a male companion; apotheosis; descent underground; epiphany; bird metamorphosis)—along with the roles played by certain gods. He argues that this indicates differing traditions that developed around an original 'single goddess of the sea', and whose presence can also be traced to Syria and Palestine and the cult of Derketo/Atargatis.[185]

In turn, Margarlit Finkelberg has argued that the links reach further, and in perhaps counter-intuitive directions. She builds a compelling case that Ino/Leukothea was the prototype for the goddess *ptgyh*/*ptnyh* of Ekron, brought to the Levant by Philistines (originally Myceneans who settled on the southern coast of Canaan) and then later identified with Derketo/Atargatis who had cult at Ashkelon.[186] This goddess' story involves her divinely inspired relationship with a Syrian youth, followed by pregnancy and the birth of a girl-child; she then exposes the baby, kills the youth, jumps into the sea and is turned into a fish-woman.[187] The mytheme may, in turn, have older strands: Finkelberg observes the potential connections between Ino-Leukothea/Derketo Atargatis and older Anatolian cultures; Karen Radner suggests a link to the Asian goddess Kubaba/Kybele via this fishy aspect.[188] Finkelberg integrates both those stories where the mother jumps and those where she is thrown into the sea (e.g., in the story of Danae and Perseus), and suggests that this may indicate a sacrificial practice in which mother and new-born were thrown into the sea, 'perhaps as part of a fertility ritual'.[189]

[185] Quotation: Fontenrose 1951: 129; Syrian/Palestinian goddess: Ibid. 139–144.

[186] Finkelberg 2006: esp. 105–115. Fontenrose (1951: 147) argues for a similar pattern of transmission although lacking the evidential details: he argues for a sea goddess cult from the eastern Mediterranean, which was seen (by Philistines) to have similarities to Semitic cults so that some mingling of characteristics took place; this continued in later times, when Phoenicians and Greeks mixed. He goes on to assert that 'the Mediterranean sea goddess is a form of the mother goddess of the Near East'.

[187] As told by Ktesias *FGrH* 688 F1(4) 2–3 Jacoby = Diod. Sic. 2.4.2–3.

[188] Radner (2005) discusses a seventh-century use of the logogram for fish to write the goddess Kubaba's name; see also Younger Jr 2009.

[189] Finkelberg 2006: 108.

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Ordeal by Water

Such analyses offer some insight into the processes of transmission of myth and cult; in antiquity, those listening to these stories may have made some of these links for themselves—as seems to have occurred, for example, in the case of the gods Melqart and Herakles.[190] Other scholars have argued that these myths conveyed more immediate and local social significance. For example, with regard to the second and third mytheme, in which a woman is either cast into a chest, or condemned to be drowned, Gustav Glotz argued that these should be seen as mirroring ancient 'trials by water' intended to test whether or not a child who was deformed or infirm should survive; and, more frequently, whether or not a woman had been raped or seduced by a god; and/or to see if their children should be regarded as legitimate. Glotz argued that the exposure was not intended to be irredeemable: these ordeals by water could be seen as both a test and a penalty.[191]

But although intriguing, it is difficult to support these assertions with historical evidence for a trial by water: although there is plentiful evidence for concerns about maintaining the chastity of unmarried girls in ancient Greek culture, there is very little that supports tests of chastity.[192] As for evidence of punishment by drowning of a woman who has lost her chastity, historical documents do not provide it. We are on slightly more stable ground with the idea that they might be sold—there is, after all, Plutarch's account of Solon's Athenian legislation allowing a father to sell his daughter as a slave if she was unchaste; nevertheless, there is little evidence that this ever actually occurred, and most scholars doubt its veracity.[193] Nor is it clear whether Glotz means the test for chastity to be understood as being part of the sequence of events and motivations of the characters within the narrative (the plot), or a dimension of the meaning of the story for its listening/reading audience—or both.[194] In neither case, however, does the idea of an

[190] E.g., Hdt. 2.44.3–4.

[191] Glotz 1906: 78–79 and Glotz 1904: 17. McHardy (2008: 10) appears to support such a possibility, but also places emphasis on the link between the theme of drowning/sale of unchaste women as presented in tragedy, and later literary texts.

[192] In Pausanias' account, the mention of a belief that only women who are virgins may dive into the sea is attached to a story about Skyllis of Skione, and his daughter Hydna (Paus. 10. 19.2), but this brief reference is not supported by any evidence within the text or elsewhere that it was viewed as a serious legal ordeal (as suggested by Glotz 1904: 57, followed by McHardy 2008: 8) or that it 'seems to reflect a test for virginity by diving' (as Burnett 1985: 167, n. 33; Burnett cites the myths of Alkyon and Aerope as support, as well as Plin. *HN* 31.23, although this is about testing water, and Phil. *VA* 1.6, which concerns the effects of a certain spring, the 'well of Asbama' near Tyana, on perjurers). It has been suggested by Jones and Ormerod 1935 ad loc. that 'this is a marginal note that has crept into the text'.

[193] See e.g., MacDowell 1978: 80. McHardy (2008: 3–4) notes this lack of evidence, but argues that this material still suggests that alongside stories told about fathers killing their daughters (through imprisonment) in tragedies and Aeschin. 1.182, this indicates a prioritization of chastity among the Athenians (4) 'to the point where death could be seen as a suitable punishment for those who violated the ideals of chastity.'

[194] Taking 'plot' as the specific sequence of events within the narrative, while 'story' indicates the 'what' of the narrative, that is the material that is shaped by the plot.

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ordeal by water seem to work: in these narratives, the plot progresses because of the father's wish to punish his daughter's offence and/or to rid himself of a troublesome child. These accounts give no indication that the father feels concerned to test his children—as far as he is concerned, he/she is guilty and must be punished.[195]

The story of Kyknos, Tennes, and Hemithea demonstrates this: Kyknos makes no attempt to test the reports of his son's misbehaviour, nor is there any indication of doubt about them—and this is borne out when he discovers they are untrue. Moreover, his reaction to the survival of his children also reinforces this idea that those cast into the chest were not intended to survive the experience: although Glotz asserts that Kyknos punished those who had told him lies about his children and 'alla passer le reste de ses jours avec ses enfants', Pausanias relates how when he tried to land on Tenedos, his son cut the ship adrift.[196] Nor does it seem that contemporary understanding viewed Tennes' action as taking place in a fit of passion that would heal with time, since it apparently gave rise to a proverb, 'So and so has cut whatever it may be with an axe of Tenedos.'[197] All this suggests that the episode of the chest within the plot did not represent a test that must be passed. Rather, it seems to have emphasized the end of the previous relationship between father and child. Similarly, those women who survive it are not portrayed as returning, redeemed, to the family home. They are no longer under the authority of the father-figure that judged them: they have emerged from this regime and achieved autonomy. Similarly, in terms of the overall story of the myth, a test is also irrelevant: the audience knows that this unchaste girl serves a larger cosmological purpose, and there is no need to test her chastity.

Confinement

If we are looking for historical legislative activity that might explain or at least relate to these events, as a way of making sense of the plot, the actions of the father-figure might rather be explained as a concern to avoid the *miasma*/pollution that would arise from directly executing those involved. Thus, in those situations where the woman is to be drowned and the child exposed, the deed is handed over to another individual of lower social status.[198] Similar concerns can be suggested as the motivation for the use of a chest in casting a young woman

[195] Glotz 1904: 17. Glotz's example of the version of the Oedipus story where Oedipus is thrown into the sea in a chest—schol. Eur. *Phoen.* 26; Hyg. *Fab.* 66—offers an alternative to the more well-known story of his exposure on land, but it does not alter the fact that Oedipus was exposed in order to be killed, rather than tested.

[196] Glotz 1904: 23. [197] Paus. 10.14.3–4.

[198] E.g., Auge in Diod. Sic. 4.33.8. That this was not necessarily seen as incurring pollution is perhaps suggested by laws that mention it as such: two sacred laws make exposure of the child a pollution (associating them with abortion rules): *LSS* 119 (see Bowman et al. 2025: no. 362) and *LSA* 84.

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and her child or her brother out to sea: the deed will be achieved through exposure or other natural causes. In this sense, we can draw a parallel between the confines of the chest and the entombing of Antigone. In Sophocles' play of that name, Creon states explicitly that his intention to wall up the young woman with just enough food is so that the whole city should not be afflicted with pollution (*hopōs miasma pas' huekphugē polis*).[199]

Mention of Antigone introduces a further interpretation, along with a further overlapping mytheme, which relates to those here: that is, the entombed or confined woman (it is a part of the Danae myth, for example).[200] In his analysis of the theme of the imprisonment of women in Greek tragedy, Richard Seaford, drawing on George Devereux's work, emphasizes the ways in which this enclosure draws in themes of darkness and blindness, relating them to sexual transgression. Seaford only briefly discusses the myths of women placed in chests, but aligns it with broader cultural ideas of enclosure as punishment for sexual transgressions, and the reassertion of 'paternal power to preserve the integrity of the [royal] household against the danger of the girl's sexual liaison with an outsider'.[201]

In these stories of women in chests on the open sea, the dimensions of imprisonment are certainly evident: the chest at one level can be seen to represent the control exerted by a father over his daughter—her fertility, her very life cycle. The chest is both a reassertion of patriarchal power and a means of dealing death (within the plot at least), while also offering allusions to death and burial within the story. But considered in light of the other two mythemes, in which a young woman either jumps unprotected into the water or is condemned to be drowned and then is sent away to slavery or to be married, we can see the chest as playing a role in the story that is rather different from the one described in the context of tragedy. In these other two mythemes, there is radical transformation for those involved: those women who jump are always dramatically changed by their experience: either they die and are lost (leaving nothing behind but a name); or they undergo a metamorphosis into another living creature; or they are transformed into goddesses. Similarly, those who are reprieved from drowning also move through place and time in an unprotected state to undergo a change of state—they are destined to become wives or mistresses.

But those women who are placed in a chest tend to remain untouched: if they are virgins when they start, they remain so; if they are the consorts of a god, no other god or mortal touches them. The case of Semele stands out here: while it is the case that she dies during the journey, her body arrives safely—no further

[199] See Soph. *Ant.* 776.

[200] In addition, there are women who are enclosed in chests but not cast into the sea, such as Arsinoe, see Seaford 1990: 81 and discussion below.

[201] Seaford (1990: 82, drawing on Devereux 1973: 36–49). This succinct description is given in his discussion of the punishment of the Vestal Virgins, which he draws as a parallel to the confinement of *Antigone*.

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physical changes have taken place and none will. The stage is set for her son, the young god Dionysos: Semele has played out her part in the plot, and fulfilled her role in the story. This aspect of this narrative pattern is also underlined by its distortion in the story of Arsinoe, who is placed in a *larnax* by her brothers after she criticizes them for murdering Alkmaion (at the command of their father). They convey her in this chest to Tegea and there, accusing her of the murder, give her as a slave to Agapenor.[202] Arsinoe's story interlaces aspects of the different mythemes discussed so far: a woman is punished by male relatives for behaviour that calls members of her family into question; she is confined and undergoes a journey in a *larnax*. But this journey is followed by a significant change of status, as Arsinoe becomes enslaved.[203] Here, the *larnax* constrains this woman, not allowing her to escape—and the 'safety' of the chest is used to protect her brothers, who remain safely unchallenged.

Rites of Passage

The interpretations of these stories, discussed above, tend to treat the sea as passive and instrumental: a necessary part of the background against which the story is played out. A different role for the sea is imagined if we view these mythemes as relating to paradigms of rites of passage. Marie Beaulieu, for example, has argued that across these myths the sea 'is an intermediary space for women that represents the liminal status of girls before marriage. Crossing this space is dangerous, yet can bring the rewards of marriage and a stable household.'[204] She suggests that those stories where a young girl is placed in a chest into the sea should be understood as providing a parallel with the symbolic death that is understood in some interpretations to be a key stage of the marriage ceremony; the chest may even be seen as the trousseau.[205] In turn, she argues that those myths in which women jump provide a symbolic denial of that same transition, trapping these young women in an eternal state of virginity.[206]

[202] Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.7.5.

[203] Ebbot 2003: 17, citing Apollodoros, argues that this episode allows the brothers 'to "reclaim" her' because they carry Arsinoe home, and that this story shows the *larnax* as a 'vaultlike structure', similar, symbolically, to the *thalamos*, in which they enclose her until she is 'ready to be led out again in another marriage'. This interpretation does not align with the story's details that Arsinoe is reduced to slavery. Ebbot cites Seaford 1990: 81, but Seaford notes that the *larnax* allows Arsinoe's brothers to 'impose the spatial confinement symbolic of a girl's subjection to her natal family and dispose of her (she has after all already left the natal home) in a place where she will be no threat to them.'

[204] Beaulieu 2016a: 118.

[205] Beaulieu 2016a: 112: this conflates a common narrative structure with a particular ritual; but, as argued below, these mythemes do not all map onto the tripartite structure of a *rite de passage* so persuasively.

[206] Beaulieu 2016a: 154, following Dowden 1989: 70–96 and 177 and Sourvinou-Inwood 1987.

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Whether we understand these myths as actually underpinning rituals of initiation or simply evoking a familiar narrative structure, such analyses introduce the possibility that they match or reflect the tripartite structure elicited by Victor Turner from Arnold van Gennep's original discussion of rites of passage, and often used to explore these stories: the stages of separation, transitional or liminal state, and reincorporation.[207] But although these women are removed from their domestic spheres, on closer examination, it is not clear that Turner's tripartite structure can be effectively mapped even onto these narratives. In what follows, I want to discuss this aspect of the interpretation of these myths, and suggest that a different theoretical approach—which returns to van Gennep's original formulation and suggests a different emphasis—may provide a more satisfying reading.

Turning to the idea of a transitional or liminal state, it can be tempting to see the sea as representing, across these mythemes, a typical 'liminal space', an in-between in which a transformation occurs. But this may risk simplifying its role in these narratives: the closest the role of the sea gets to representing such a liminal space is in the mytheme of the woman in a chest, and there, as noted above, its function is more ambiguous. It functions in that plot as a threat, but as the story unfolds, it is revealed as a route to safety. Moreover, in most of the stories (Rhoeo, Hemithea, Danae, Auge), the woman does not change during the journey; she is, rather, kept secure, away from external influences. Only the story of Semele, who dies during her journey, offers a possible exception—but even there, the chest offers a place of safety for her body.

In the other two mythemes, similar caution needs to be exercised. In those stories where the father is described as threatening the woman with drowning as a penalty, the sea offers not so much a space in-between through which the woman must travel; instead, it signals a radical change in her environment, since the domestic sphere, once secure, is now fatal. Finally, in those stories where a young woman is metamorphosed, she often does not reach the sea at all, let along pass through it (the jump itself, or the countryside through which she flees might be a better candidate for such a liminal space). As this suggests, it is also difficult to identify a stage of reincorporation across these mythemes: most obviously, those women who jump simply fail to be reincorporated, either dying or being transformed. In the other two mythemes, these women either die, or (more usually) are moved to a distant community, their place of origin and original society left behind, either forgotten or rejected altogether, or simply now out of reach.[208]

[207] Turner 1964, 1969, drawing on van Gennep 1960 (originally, 1909); see Redfield 2003: 259.

[208] This also applies to the figure of Iphigeneia who, in Euripides' play *Iphigeneia at Tauris* crosses the sea to Tauris to escape her death. Beaulieu (2016a: 117) uses her example to support the argument that the sea represents marriage—because in her final crossing of the sea 'she is reintegrated to her family by Orestes'; but this is to elide that the first two of her sea-crossings, by Beaulieu's own account, are (i) a journey to her own death; (ii) a journey to become a priestess at Tauris. Her final journey, the return to Greece, cannot easily be described as an integration to her family, which is riven with internal deaths; she is not returning to be married, but, on Artemis' instruction, to become priestess at Brauron.

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Could a different symbolic logic provide a more effective explanation? Bruce Lincoln's alternative of 'enclosure-metamorphosis-emergence', in *Emerging from the Chrysalis: Rituals of Women's Initiations*, has been put forward as offering a more appropriate model for use in analysing rituals concerned with women.[209] As the title of his book suggests, the experience of a woman in such a ritual is likened to a butterfly emerging from a chrysalis. In an afterword to the 1991 revised edition, Lincoln stresses how this image must be nuanced: one is a bio-chemical process, the other socially constructed.[210] He draws attention to the way in which such an initiation process is intended 'to pound and coax the flesh of another woman—someone young and (literally) impressionable—into a desirable shape: a replica of that shape that society, for its own reasons, has come to desire.'[211] In these rituals and the myths that accompany them, Lincoln sees a cosmological message: these stories are intended as 'religious compensation' for 'socio-political deprivation', offering women insight into their cosmological status, encouraging them to endure their situation as mortals. This approach offers an effective interpretation of the myth of Demeter and Persephone, as Lincoln demonstrates.[212]

Nevertheless, the three narrative patterns discussed here are less compliant. The mytheme that aligns most closely with this alternative logic is that of the woman who is condemned to be drowned. Her 'enclosure' is marked by her being captured and handed over to another to be killed. The journey that follows can be described in terms of a 'metamorphosis', but not as Lincoln evokes it, since it is not followed by her conforming to an ideal type, or even returning home. Rather, she is removed from her original community, on a journey that changes her, sometimes to a lower social status. The other mythemes align even less neatly: those women who jump are first seen racing across the landscape, far from the confines of their domestic space or any other kind of enclosure. They can be said to experience a kind of metamorphosis and emergence, but, again, not as Lincoln describes it, since the nature of this final stage varies. Some are changed and emerge as a different creature altogether, living in a very different way, if not in a different place, while others are released into death. Finally, turning to the mytheme that describes women being imprisoned in a chest, although it could be argued that the chest is a form of enclosure, its role is ambiguous: these young women are confined in the process of being set free; they do not experience a metamorphosis, as Lincoln evokes it, since, when they do emerge they are, whether dead or alive, far away from home and will not return.

As noted, both Beaulieu and Lincoln are drawing on the interpretation of rites of passage by Victor Turner, who, in turn, was working with a particular interpretation of the work of Arnold van Gennep. In his framework, van Gennep

[209] Lincoln 1991.
[210] Lincoln 1991: 110–120.
[211] Lincoln 1991: 111.
[212] Lincoln 1991: 72–90.

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identifies three stages: first, *separation*, a separation from society; followed by *la période de marge* 'a period of margin'; and finally *agrégation*, or incorporation into society.[213] But while Turner focuses on the middle stage—the period of margin and the notion of liminality—as a ritual role of being in a state of ritual ambiguity, a re-reading of van Gennep's ideas suggests that the emphasis of his analysis lay elsewhere. In particular, scholars have since highlighted the importance he gave to the idea of rebirth, in which 'life-course rituals revive social lives… maintain status transitions, yet simultaneously activate experiences of liminality, margin, and disintegration.'[214] Van Gennep, they argue, understood this as a process experienced not only by individuals and societies, but—relevant to this study in particular—also by vegetables, animals, celestial bodies and, indeed, the cosmos.[215] Moreover, rather than this leading to a sense of social laws and hierarchies, scholars have emphasized the dynamism of van Gennep's framework and the ways in which his model drew on biological parallels.[216] The phenomena explored by ethnography and folklore were 'faits vivants' or 'living facts', which were in 'perpetual transformation'.[217] In those processes of change, the *marge* is understood as a pivotal point between two countervailing forces, a state of movement that cannot be seen, in which everything changes although, it seems, 'life stops'.[218] This description seems to resonate with the experience of metamorphosis as we have found it evoked in the ancient sources—as a moment in which everything changes, even as, perhaps, life as it has been known, stops, and although the process of transformation itself cannot be seen.

Whether or not we want to see these mythic narratives as participating in 'rites of passage', this review of van Gennep's ideas perhaps provides a different paradigm for considering the tripartite structure of these stories. Rather than seeing change as a brief period in between two stages of stasis, it draws attention to an ongoing process of change, occasionally punctuated by pauses. This notion of perpetual change seems to align with the stories in this case study in particular, recalling the constant motion of the sea: in these narratives that 'space' both is, and offers a locus of, change, with the potential for a range of different outcomes and meanings.[219] Moreover, just as van Gennep describes countervailing forces as a key element of his process, similarly, again and again in these stories, we feel the potency of opposing forces. Familial structures, social institutions, and mortal expectations are confounded, and physical and metaphysical boundaries are

[213] Van Gennep 1981. [214] Rothem and Fischer 2018: 259.

[215] Van Gennep 1981: 279: 'Et c'est là une idée grandiose de rattacher les étapes de la vie humaine à celle de la vie animale et végétale, puis, par une sorte de divination préscientifique, aux grands rythmes de l'univers.' See Rothem and Fischer 2018: 258.

[216] Hochner 2018: 307. [217] Van Gennep 1934: 25, cited in Hochner 2018: 307.

[218] Van Gennep 1981: 258, cited by and with further explication Hochner 2018: 306.

[219] It is well established that the sea's meaning is multivalent: see n. 1 of this case study for further literature.

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crossed; gods pursue mortal women; father-figures, faced with the breaking of social and sexual mores, or determined to disprove an oracle, condemn their daughters to drown, or place them in a chest and cast them out to sea; the *larnax*, which appears to be a prison, may provide a place of safety; executioners may choose to keep their victims alive.

Across these narrative patterns, such opposing forces, meet, in the narrative, at and in the sea—in different ways and with different outcomes. Their female protagonists do not return home to traditional roles: instead, they transgress the familiar structures of everyday life, find no way to reintegrate, and cross into alternative physical and social states to reach a new existence. Women condemned to be drowned or cast out in a chest for their offences, cross social and spatial boundaries and are transformed or die. Of the women who jump, Ochne and Bolina attain an unexpected and significant social role, set in the landscape and memory of their communities;[220] while, in the process of rejecting divine attention Asteria and the Alkyonides become other creatures; and Britomartis/Aphaia/Diktynna, Parthenos and Molpadia, Ino/Leukothea acquire divine status. Across these metamorphoses, the moment of change is not described, nor is it easy to imagine; and the very invisibility, or rather non-visibility, of the event transforms the human body from one that is static and unchanging, to a locus of continuous dynamism.

Conclusion: A 'Period of Margin'

This case study has examined metamorphoses associated with different kinds of water sources—and found different types of transformations. In the first section, 'Fresh Water', it explored the narrative patterns of stories of men and women whose metamorphoses and deaths are related to the creation of rivers and springs, the stories shaped by a dynamic of remembrance. The evidence reveals how these stories may have developed in ancient mythical imaginations. Earlier sources tend not to feature metamorphoses and there are relatively few stories in which springs are named after those who die nearby. But the stories of later authors are more elaborate and significantly gendered: rivers are named after the heroes that are killed or commit suicide in them or by them; women's deaths are marked by springs.[221] If there is a metamorphosis, then, similarly, women tend to become springs and men rivers. These stories may focus on liquid elements of mortal bodies, rather than the bodies themselves: for men, blood; for women, tears.

[220] Ochne's mytheme is perhaps closest in structure to that of Halia, a victim of violent incest, whose lack of post-mortem development suggests that, like Ochne, she/her mytheme is something of a sub-plot to a stronger story: in each case, the *aition* of a cult focused on a male figure.

[221] In particular, [Plut.] *De fluviis*.

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Indeed, tears are extremely significant for these tales, since the overwhelmingly common emotion they describe is grief, which most frequently appears to catalyse (and/or be expressed through) the transformations they relate. But other themes make themselves felt: we see examples of pride and shame, and of divinities offended, suggesting the idea that the rivers and springs of these stories may be intended to evoke a cleansing of *miasma*/pollution. But the result of the transformations in these stories does not seem to eliminate transgressions; instead, a dynamic of remembrance recurs. These metamorphoses commemorate what has happened, and the depth of the related emotions expressed by the protagonists. These stories tell of grief and other emotions so intense they lead to death, so intense they are commemorated—and may be embodied—in the rivers and springs of the surrounding landscape.

The second section of this case study has explored a number of different mythemes concerning transformations that occur in relation to the sea. By investigating these stories alongside and in relation to each other, I have suggested that we can see familiar themes of intense emotion and of risk, and also trace some ways in which these stories are gendered. They also reveal the many different facets played by the sea in the cultural imagination.

The stories about men are thematically perhaps more varied: for example, there are those who find themselves becoming in some way a more remarkable figure. Arion, Theseus, Enalos, and the body of Hesiod, all pass through the sea, supported by dolphins in their journeys; they are able to witness the richness and power of the sea, and are somehow touched by it, supported by, and imbued with, divinity. Glaukos particularly stands out in this list for his transformation into a creature with oracular powers. There are stories of punishment as well—featuring Lichas, Myrtilos, Lokrian Ajax, and Ikaros—and these highlight the role of the sea as destructive. Late versions of stories of Aisakos and Aigeus introduce the sea as a place of death—showing them jumping from grief, a mytheme that is more usually found in relation to female protagonists. Similar 'borrowings' of female narrative patterns occur in the stories of Tennes and Thoas, thrown into chests in the sea; or, in a reversal of the usual gender structure, in stories of mothers (Ino and Khione) throwing their sons (Melikertes and Eumolpos) into the sea—a pattern that becomes very distorted in the tale of Medea disposing of her brother's body parts.

In contrast, the women who jump into the sea or are thrown into the sea are almost always either being punished or trying to escape a terrible ordeal. These stories largely describe situations of danger arising from a young woman's sexuality: here are bodies at risk, which put their communities at risk; here is potential social pollution that must be resolved. A variety of interpretations have been put forward that relate these mythemes to social structures—emphasizing the resolution of disruption and restoration of order. In particular, some analyses have argued for the use of the ritual or narrative structure of 'rites of passage' as

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understood by Victor Turner, which outline tripartite stages of separation, transitional or liminal state, and reincorporation, and focus on the reassertion of stability.

But, in fact, this is not what we find in these tales—and, as I have argued here, it also may not have been the focus of the original formulation of rites of passage, as developed by van Gennep. Drawing on new interpretations of van Gennep's work, we find that his tripartite structure emphasizes, not the static and fixed outcome of the final stage, but an ongoing process of dynamic life and development: a rebirth. It is a structure that resonates across these mythemes: forced to leave their familiar lives, these women undergo a passage over the sea, a voyage or a leap, in the blink of an eye—a 'period of margin' or metamorphosis—to become something 'other'. But this is not a return home, nor is it a journey to regular, ordered life; instead, these women are depicted as crossing social, spatial, ontological boundaries, and are transformed.

As I noted at the beginning of this case study, this set of mythemes does not suggest that mortal bodies could or would transform into sea water; instead, they evoke something of the centrality of the role of the sea in the context of ancient thought—in particular as a vehicle for experiencing, and a narrative symbol for communicating, experiences of profound, cosmological change. This set of mythemes, while they do not describe bodies becoming another substance, are, nevertheless, vivid depictions of bodies under extreme pressure, physically and emotionally suffering, and in flux. The protagonists are brutally expelled from their familiar setting, they seek or are given 'a period of margin'—and they are changed. These stories, with their underlying, repeating pattern of separation, metamorphosis, and rebirth, offered their ancient audiences (and continue to express), I suggest, a shared narrative of the embodied experience of traumatizing violence and extreme emotion.

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In Conclusion

Embodied Emotion

This study set out to investigate what Greco-Roman myths of metamorphosis might reveal about the ancient cultures that told them. It has explored not only what these stories might indicate about conceptions of the body, but specifically what they may communicate about the *experience* of the body, its perceived interrelations with society, the surrounding landscape, and the wider cosmos—and the social, natural, and supernatural risks that these presented. The fundamental narrative structures of these stories were, I have argued, initially established before and during the Archaic and Classical periods of ancient Greek culture. They indicate how, in that ancient cultural imaginary, mortals (male and female), gods, and the surrounding landscape were understood as imbricated. They uncover landscapes that are, and comprise, elements that are fluid and changeable, in which emotions and experiences interact with matter, in which human and non-human—and more-than-human—blend and blur to create the surrounding landscape.

We can consider these stories in terms of, first, the process of their telling, then, what they tell. In terms of their telling, we have seen how different versions of these stories were developed over time and place and culture, offering their audiences particular emphases and foci. They may start the story of transformation at different points, adding various details, and often highlighting different kinds of responses, including metamorphoses, by male and female protagonists. We can see the ways in which authors across Greco-Roman cultures developed their own ideas—adding to what we perceive to be an existing story; drawing out specific imagery; interweaving other themes. We watch the instant of metamorphosis, at first untraceable in the text, often a mere allusion to difference, itself become transformed into a passage of time and experience. In some cases, we are moved to ask just when the metamorphosis itself is understood to begin: is it a moment of change, or does it also include the narrative pathways that take us to that moment, and the experiences that follow?

Nevertheless, I have argued, while stories may be altered, the underlying narrative patterns—the mythemes—of these tales remain; and that brings us to the theme of what they tell. I have argued that these myths may reveal glimpses of the social and cultural imaginary of those who told and heard these stories. These myths of metamorphosis offer a 'deep mapping' of a landscape set between reality

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and the imaginary in which bodies were perceived both to be at risk, because of the situations into which they are put, and, at the same time, to be of risk, that is, posing a threat to the communities around them. They reveal ideas about the gendered social roles within which behaviour was prescribed; the particular social dangers believed to be posed by men and women who transgressed these boundaries. And, in these stories, we can trace ancient Greek concepts of metaphysical risk: *miasma* or pollution, in which acts that may offend the gods are both the prompts for and the results of transformations; and the concept of *agos* or 'sacrality', in which individuals become the possessions of the gods.

The overview of stories in this study suggests that one key area of risk was the experiencing of traumatic, even violent emotions. In some stories, it is the extremity of an emotion that seems to prompt a metamorphosis; in others, the metamorphosis itself can be described as the enactment of an extreme emotion. In either case, emotions seem to be integral to the process of reshaping mortals in, and into, the elements that comprise the surrounding world. And it is in depicting these experiences, I have argued, that these stories convey an intuitive embodied experience, similar to (although not mapping directly onto) modern accounts of embodied responses to extreme emotions and traumatic experiences. These changes, as depicted in these stories, are gendered. While, overall, this material may offer particular insights about ancient conceptions of both male and female bodies and their experience, there is a particular focus on the female body, its vulnerability to violence or emotions (especially deep grief), its profound interactions with the surrounding landscape. This is not to deny that men may also be transformed; only to point out that this is a less common experience, with different kinds of outcomes. Male bodies often seem to escape a complete metamorphosis; instead, strikingly, it is often their blood that transforms, that becomes the medium through which their experience is expressed.

Thus, stories of petrifaction, or of becoming plants, express an experience of being rooted to the spot, unable to move, or speak—similar to what has been called in modern research on trauma responses, the stage of 'Fright'. Stories relating to Air, such as being snatched away, to become stars or birds, or jumping/falling from high places, suggest the ways in which trauma can cause us to feel removed from our surroundings and ourselves—similar to modern understanding of dissociation. These stories evoke the experience of 'Flag' or 'Faint' responses to trauma, in which an individual becomes flaccidly immobile and unable to support themselves upright, before completely passing out. In 'Fire', we find a complex set of experiences that explore the physiological shock of revelation, and concomitant dynamics of secrecy, deceit, and concealment. These are stories of immolation that convey, on the one hand, a recognizable response to traumatic events that manifests as an overwhelming urge to 'fight' against a danger that threatens. In some of these stories, the protagonists cannot escape the danger they face, and are transformed—in some they are obliterated. In these, we

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can see the wielding of fire by others, and its annihilating force, as expressions of the powerful experience of rage. Finally, in myths relating to Water, those concerned with fresh water tend to emphasize the pain of extreme grief and the ceaseless flow of memories in endless remembrance; while those stories that relate to the sea evoke experiences of violent rebirth—where the individual, and the landscape around them, become irreversibly transformed.

In making this analysis, and drawing out these parallels, I am not arguing that modern trauma research 'explains' these myths; rather, I am offering this as an additional way of viewing these stories—and the insights they convey about the societies in which they have circulated. These 'spatial narratives' depict, not, or not only, physical topographies, but broader accounts about the nature of that landscape and those who inhabited it:[1] a 'mythic then' and 'storied now' in which bodies comprise, and interact with, earth, air, fire, and water—and are changed, catalysed by the experience of traumatic events and intense, even violent emotions. While these myths of metamorphosis are specific to the ancient contexts in which they were told and heard, they may also offer insights into embodied experiences that are shared across cultures, including our own.

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[1] Bodenhamer 2015, esp. 12 on spatial narratives.

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